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Bhakti Tradition

Detailed Course on Ancient Indian History - UGC NET June 2024

Chandra Bhal Tiwari Om • Lesson 38 • Feb 19, 2024

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Temple Architecture

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- The Gupta period marks the beginning of structural temple architecture. As evidenced from the extant monuments, there was experimentation in a number of forms and designs, out of which two significant temple styles evolved, one in the North and the other in the South.
- The following well defined types may be identified:

(1) Flat-roofed, square temple with a shallow pillared porch in front (eg. ***Temple No. XVII at Sanchi, Kankali Devi temple at Tigawa and Vishnu and Varaha temples at Eran, Madhya Pradesh***).;

(2) Flat-roofed, square temple with a covered ambulatory around the sanctum and preceded by a pillared porch, sometimes with a second storey above (Example : ***Parvati temple at Nachna Kuthara, the Siva temple at Bhumara (both in Madhya Pradesh) and the Lad Khan at Aihole***);

(3) Square temple with a low and squat sikhara (tower) above (Example : ***Dasavatara temple at Deogarh (Jhansi district) and the brick temple at Bhitargaon (Kanpur district)***);

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(4) Rectangular temple with an apsidal back and a barrel-vaulted roof above (Example : ***Ter (Sholapur district) and the Kapoteshvara temple at Cezarla (Krishna district)***); and

(5) Circular temple with shallow rectangular projections at the four cardinal faces (Example : ***Maniyar Matha (shrine of Mani Naga) at Rajgir, Bihar***).

- The second and the third types of Gupta temples, to be called ***vimana*** (storeyed) and ***sikhara types***, represent elaborations of the first in respect of both the ground-plan and elevation.
- In the following centuries, these two types supposedly underwent further improvements and crystallised to form two distinctive temple styles respectively in the South and the North.

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Bhitargaon Temple

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Basic Features of Indian Temples

Garbhagriha (Sanctum Sanctorum)

- It literally means womb-house and is a cave like sanctum.
- In the earliest temples, it was a small cubical structure with a single entrance.
- Later it grew into larger chambers.
- The Garbhagriha is made to house the main icon (main deity) which is itself the focus of much ritual attention.

Mandapa

- It is the entrance to the temple.
- It may be a portico or colonnaded (series of columns placed at regular intervals) hall that incorporate space for a large number of worshippers.
- Some temples have multiple mandapas in different sizes named as Ardhamandapa, Mandapa and Mahamandapa.

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Shikhara or Vimana

- They are mountain like spire of a free standing temple.
- Shikhara is found in North Indian temples and Vimana is found in South Indian temples.
- Shikhara has a curving shape while Vimana has a pyramidal like structure.

Vahana

- It is the mount or vehicle of the temple's main deity along with a standard pillar or Dhvaj which is placed axially before the sanctum.

Amalaka

- It is a stone disc like structure crowning the top of the North Indian style shikhara.

Kalasha

- Wide-mouthed pot or ornamental pot-design decorating the shikhara in North Indian temples.

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Antarala (vestibule)

- Antarala is a transition area between the Garbhagriha and the temple's main hall (mandapa).

Jagati

- It is a raised platform for sitting and praying and is common in North Indian temples.

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Amalaka
Vestibule (antarala)
Great Hall (mahamandapa)
Inner sanctum
(garbhagrha)
Hall (mandapa)
secondary tower
(urushringa)
Entrance Porch
(ardhamandapa)

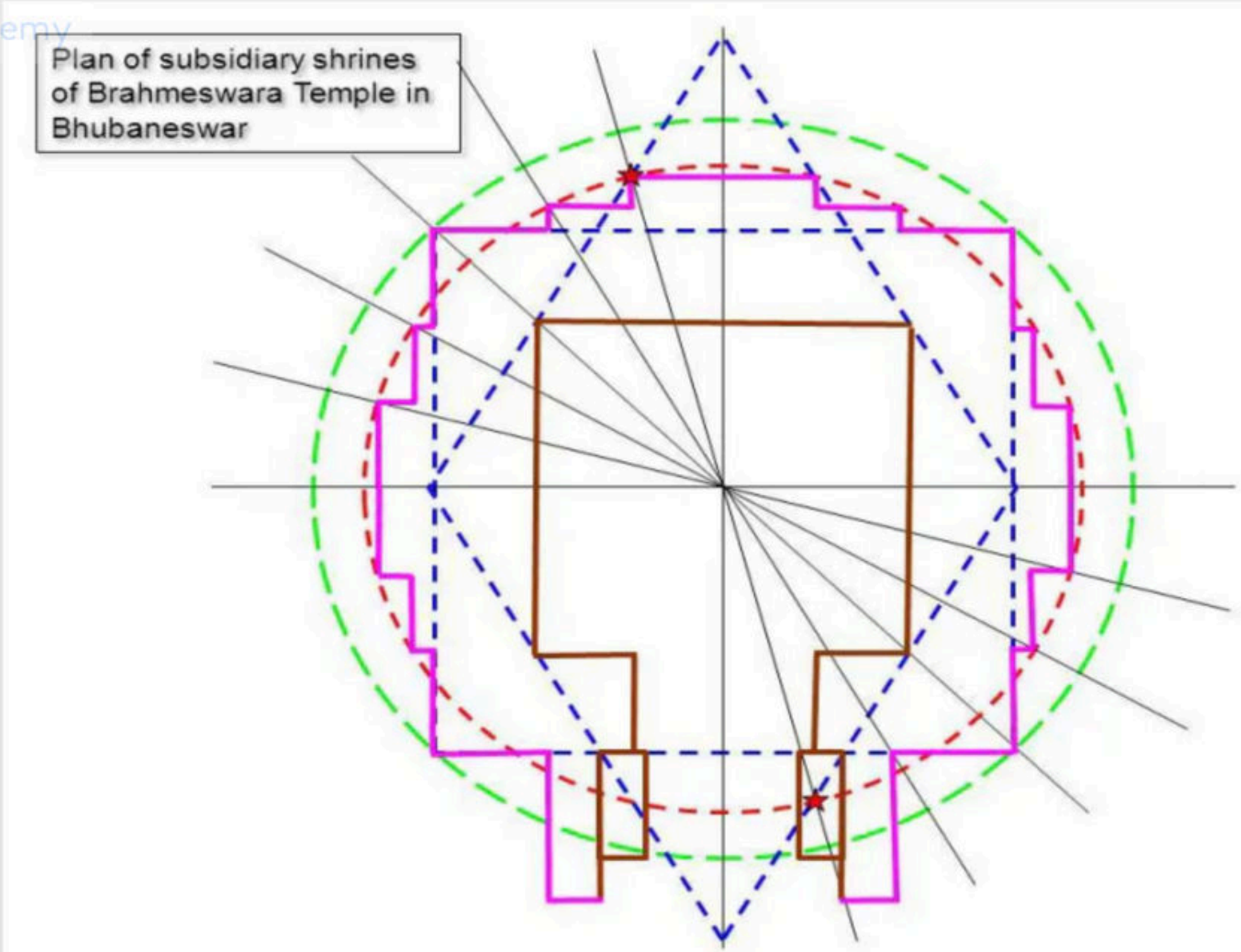
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Emergence of Later Temple Styles

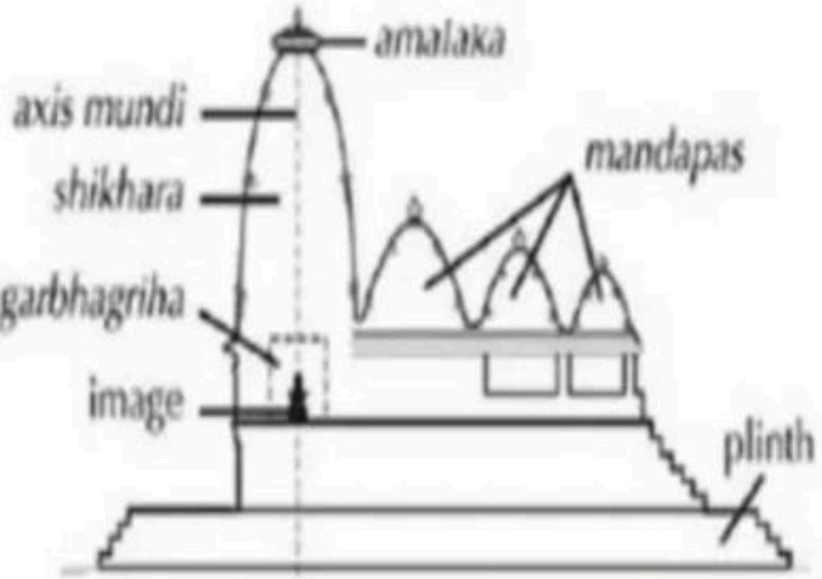
- The major temple styles listed and described in the Vastu Sastra texts are the nagara, dravida and vesara.
- Every temple of North India, irrespective of its situation and date, reveals characteristic features in planning and elevation. *The North Indian temple is a square one with a number of* ***graduated projections (rathakas)*** *in the middle of each face, which gives it a cruciform shape in the exterior*. In elevation it exhibits a **tower (sikhara),** gradually inclining inwards and capped by a spheroid slab with ribs round the edge **(amalaka).** ***The cruciform ground-plan and the curvilinear tower may, hence, be regarded as the salient features of a Nagara temple.***
- A temple of South India has the ***sanctum cella (garbha griha)*** situated invariably within an **ambulatory hall** and a ***pyramidal tower*** formed by an accumulation of ***storey after storey in receding dimensions***. These are to be regarded as the distinctive characteristics of a ***Dravida temple***.

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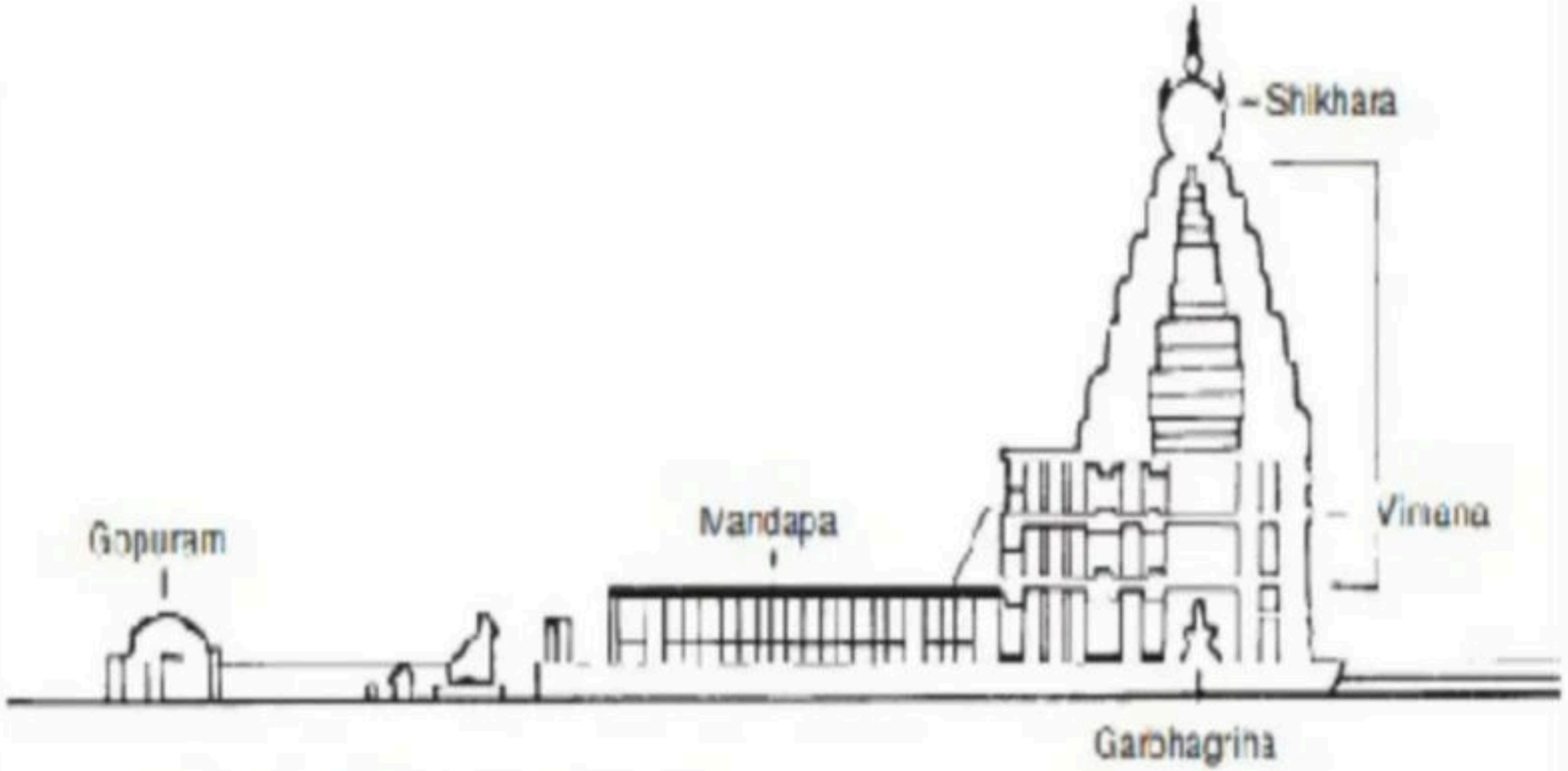
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Plan of subsidiary shrines of Brahmeswara Temple in Bhubaneswar

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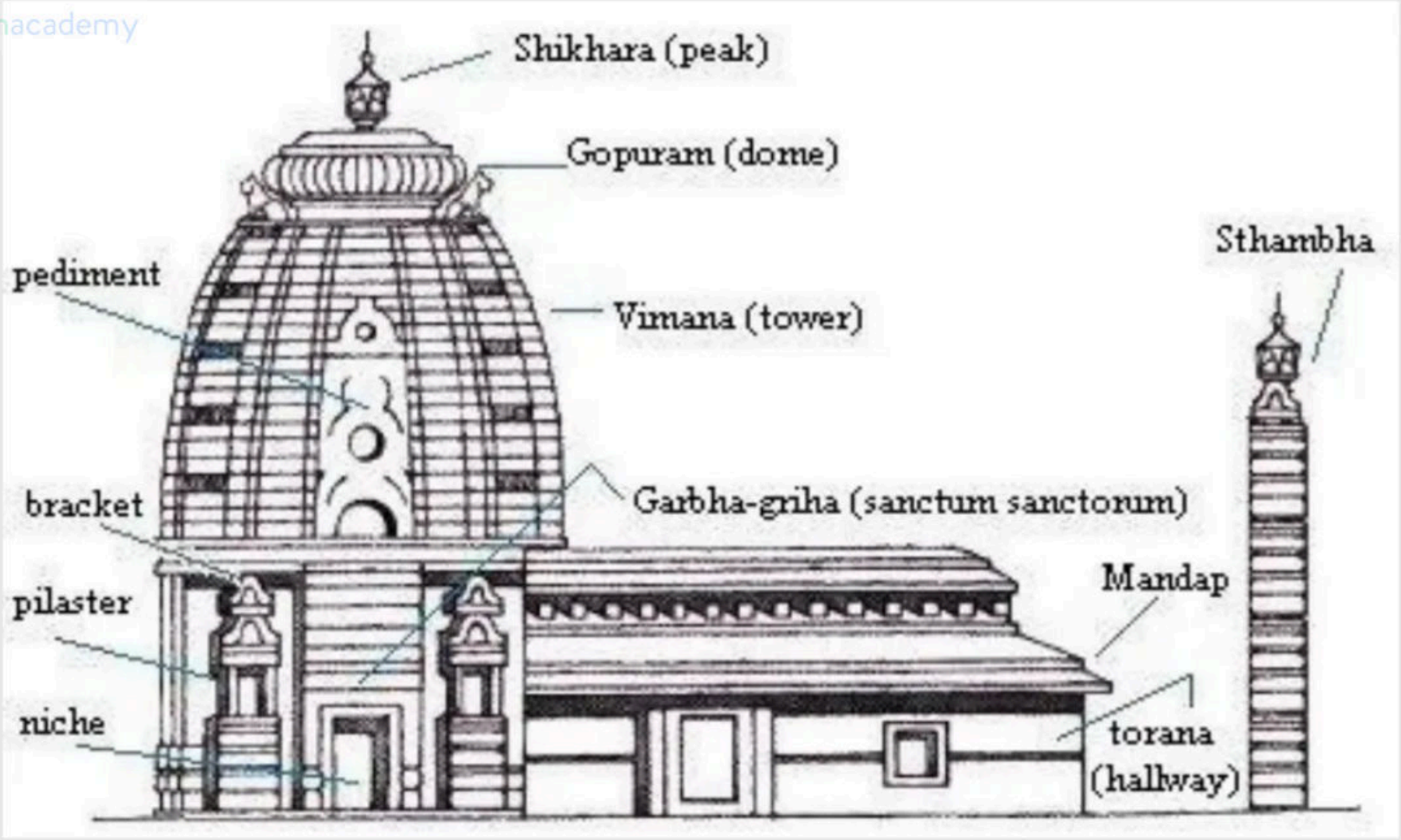


Nagar style of architecture



Dravida style of architecture

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Shikhara (peak)
Gopuram (dome)
pediment
Vimana (tower)
Sthambha
bracket
Garbha-griha (sanctum sanctorum)
Mandap
pilaster
niche
torana
(hallway)

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Nagara Style

- Initially, the temple originated as a ***flat-roofed square structure in the form of a cell (shrine)***, with a *pillared porch in front*. Variants of the flat-roofed structure persisted under the post-Gupta dynasties of north and central India, and the *Nagara style* emerged with the evolution of a sikhara or superstructure over the square shrine.
- The subsequent development of the nagara style can be traced through regional schools, of which the major ones were those of ***Orissa*** (ancient Kalinga), ***central India*** (ancient Jejakabhukti-Mahoba), ***Rajasthan*** (the home of the Rajput dynasties) and ***Gujarat*** (ancient Gurjaradesa).
- These represent significant stylistic and aesthetic developments and variations in the vertical ascent and horizontal elaboration of the temple structure.
- In Uttar Pradesh (and its hill states), Bihar, Bengal and Himachal Pradesh, temples of the northern style were erected without architectural and stylistically significant differences. Kashmir developed a distinct class of temples, away from the main nagara style.

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- There are many subdivisions of Nagara temples depending on the shape of the shikhara.
- **Rekha-Prasadatype** or **Latinatype** **:** This type of temple has square shikhara at the base and its walls curve slowly inward towards the top. They are mainly used to house the main garbhagriha.
- **Phamsana type** - Phamsana buildings tend to be broader and shorter than Latina ones. Their roofs are composed of several slabs that gently rise to a single point over the centre of the building, unlike the Latina ones which look like sharply rising tall towers. Phamsana roofs do not curve inward. Instead, they slope upwards on a straight incline. Phamsana design is used for the mandapas.
- **Valabhi type** - These are rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber. The edge of this vaulted chamber is rounded, like the bamboo or wooden wagons that would have been drawn by bullocks in ancient times. They are usually called wagon vaulted buildings.

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Bullets (Nagara)

- In Nagara style, it is common for an entire temple to be built on a stone platform with steps leading up to it.
- Unlike South Indian temples it does not usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways.
- The three main distinctive features of Nagar style is ***Shikhara*** (Curvilinear tower), ***Garbhagriha*** (Sanctum Sanctorum), ***Mandapa*** (Entrance Hall)
- While the earliest temples had just one tower or shikhara, later temples had multiple Shikharas.
- The garbhagriha is always located directly under the tallest tower.
- **Examples** - Dashavatara temple (Deogarh), Vishwanatha temple (Khajuraho), Lakshman Temple (Khajuraho), Jagannath Temple (Puri).

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Dravida Style

- The nucleus of the Dravida temple is the ***storeyed form of the Gupta temple***, and the ***rock-cut rathas of Mahabalipuram*** (7 th century CE) supply an interesting stage in the evolution of the Dravida style. Each of the rathas, except the Draupadi, exhibits a storeyed elevation of the roof, each storey terminating in a convex rolled cornice, ornamented with chaitya window arches.
- In these rathas, one may recognise the origin of the twin fundamental features of the Dravida temple, viz., ***the vimana*** (representing the sanctum with its tall pyramidal tower) and the ***gopuram*** (the immense pile of the gateway leading to the temple enclosure).
- With its beginnings in the Pallava rock-cut rathas in the first half of the 7 th century CE, the Dravida style passes through a long process of evolution and elaboration under different dynasties of the South. The style flourished for nearly a thousand years and, confined within a comparatively small area, remained more or less compact and unilateral.

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- ***The rock-cut method of the initial phase was replaced by the structural one during the reign of Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha. The Shore temple at Mahabalipuram, possibly the first structural temple to be built in the South, consists of two shrines, symmetrically joined to each other.***
- *An organic and unified conception of a temple scheme, in which all the trappings of the Dravida style are clearly expressed and harmoniously adjusted to one another, first comes into view in the celebrated* ***Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram, also built by Rajasimha****.*
- With all the appurtenances, like the walled court, the gopuram, the pillared mandapa and the vimana, all complete and in their forms and positions, the *Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram may be described as one of the key monuments of the early Dravida style*.

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- A more developed sense of composition is clearly evident in the ***Vaikunta Perumal temple*** at Kanchipuram, built by ***Nandivarman II***. Architectural activity in the South continued in the later phase of the Pallava rule. The rich heritage of the Pallava tradition passed on to the Cholas, under whom the Dravida style enters yet another brilliant and distinctive phase.
- There are some sub-divisions of Dravida temples based on shapes :

➢ Square, usually called ***Kuta or caturasra***

➢ Rectangular or ***shala or ayatasra***

➢ Elliptical or ***vrittayata*** also called ***gaja-prishta*** or ***elephant backed***

➢ Circular or ***vritta***

➢ Octagonal or ***ashtasra***

- It must, however, be remembered that this is a simplistic differentiation of the subdivisions. Several different shapes may be combined in specific periods and places to create their own unique style.

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Bullets (Dravidian)

- Unlike the Nagara temple, the Dravida temple is enclosed within a compound wall.
- The front wall has an entrance gateway in its centre, which is known as a **gopuram**.
- The shape of the main temple tower known as **Vimana** is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving shikhara of North India.
- In the South Indian temples, the word **Shikhara** is used only for the crowning element at the top of the temple which is equivalent to the **amalaka** and **kalasha** of North Indian temples.
- In the Dravida style temples, one will generally find sculptures of fierce **dvarapalas** or the door-keepers guarding the temple.
- It is common to find a large water reservoir, or a temple tank, enclosed within the complex.

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- Subsidiary shrines are either incorporated within the main temple tower or located as distinct, separate small shrines beside the main temple.
- Unlike Nagara style, at some of the most sacred temples in South India, the main temple in which the garbhagriha is situated has, in fact, one of the smallest towers.
- **Examples** - ***Shore temple (Mahabalipuram), Brihadesvara temple (Thanjavur), Meenakshi Temple (Madurai)***

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Vesara Style

- The Vesara style is also known as the ***Chalukyan or Deccan style***. Its beginnings may be traced back to the days of the early Chalukyan kings in the 7 th and 8 th centuries CE.
- At Aihole and Pattadakal and other places, Dravida and Nagara temples were being erected side by side. This co-existence afforded an opportunity for a certain admixture of the ideas of the two, leading to the emergence under the later Chalukyan rulers, of a mixed or hybrid style. In this development, it is the Dravida, rather than the Nagara conception that played a comparatively more important role.
- The Chalukyan temple, like the Dravida, consists of two main features, ***the vimana and the mandapa, joined by an antarala, with occasionally, an additional open mandapa in front.*** In course of time, there is a marked tendency to compress the heights of the storeyed stages of the vimana.

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- At the same time, ornamental *niche motifs*, repeated one above the other, up the ascent of the tower, *simulate the vertical bands of the northern spire*. Here is an evident inspiration from the Nagara sikhara.
- The Chalukyan temple presents an essential divergence from the Dravida in *not having its sanctum cella enclosed within a covered ambulatory.*
- In the treatment of the exterior walls, there seems to have been a blending, again, of Nagara and Dravida ideas. *The walls are broken up by ratha offsets in the characteristic Nagara fashion, further spaced at regular intervals by pilasters in accordance with the usual Dravida mode.*

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- The recesses thus formed, are usually filled up by niches with superstructures of the Nagara or of the Dravida style, thus producing a refrain of great artistic beauty. Some of the Chalukyan and most of the Hoysala temples are distinguished for their multiple-shrined compositions in which *two, three or four shrines are arranged around the common mandapa hall.*
- Apart from architectural treatment, the Chalukyan temple, or its descendant, the Hoysala, is also characterised by an *exuberant plastic ornament covering all its external surfaces which seem to have a richly fretted appearance from the base to the top.*
- In the interior, the pillars and door-frames, as well as ceilings, are likewise exuberantly treated. Considered as a whole, *the Chalukyan temple, together with its offshoot, the Hoysala, represents one of the most ornate and florid expressions of Indian architecture.*

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Kashmiri Style

- Buddhism was introduced in Kashmir soon after the Buddha's demise and king Ashoka is said to have built stupas in the 3rd c. BCE.
- With the background of Buddhist artistic tradition, Kashmiri artisans evolved a style of Hindu temple architecture with a distinct characteristic of its own. Kashmir temple exhibits a unique bland of foreign style and indigenous creativity that resulted in a distinctive architecture which was more suited to their geographic and climate conditions.

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- ***The temple of Lodhu*** situated 16 miles from Srinagar is in the midst of a tank and is said to be the earliest remaining stone structure. This temple does not find mention by Kalhana or any other text. The temple is a plain and simple square, walled structure, circular on the inside. A large number of dressed stones are lying around in the tank, notable among them are the memorial stones depicting war heroes. *The corbelled corners of the structure suggest that it had a pyramidal roof as found at Pandrathen*. Because of its simpler type of trefoil niche, consisting of a rounded arch inside a trefoil pediment and its unique circular plan, it is representative of the earliest engineering developments which later on culminated at Martand.

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- ***7th and 8th century marked the culmination of art during the reign of Karakota rulers***. **Lalitaditya Miktapida (724-761 AD**) ushered in an era of glory and prosperity in the kingdom. After gaining victories over Punjab, Kananuj and Bihar, he turned his attention to the bordering territories of Kashmir . He led the victorious army to Dardistan, Ladakh and Tibet .
- During the Karakota rule there was a crisis across which brought a improvised style into being. We see a profound influence of Chinese, apparent from faces and dresses, which are typically Mangoloid. Building art was a product of influences from different classical schools viz-Greko-Roman, Gandharan, while as the sculpture iconography reflects the tremendous central Asian impact.
- ***Lalitaditya built the famous and elegant Sun temple at Martand and Parihaskesvar at his capital Parihasapura***. The temple at Martand is the most impressive of all the ancient structures of Kashmir . Dedicated to Sun god, Surya this magnificent edifice is located on a Kerewa or tableland.

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- The temple proper contains *garbhagriha, antarâla* and closed *mandapa*, approached by grand flight of steps. The plinth supporting the Central shrine has two tiers, both with niches. The upper row has large niche, with figures of 37 divinities including Surya, Shiva, Vishnu, Parvati, Ganga , Yamuna and the Dikpalas. Exteriorly the sanctum is *tri-ratha* in plan.
- Martand reveal a great depth of thought, the delicacy of execution and the balanced proportion of figures. Even in its present ruinous condition, Martand evokes awe and wonder and is hailed as the most striking masterpiece of architecture of Kashmir , incomparable for its artistic grandeur.

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- The second golden age of temple building was brought into being by the patronage of king **Avantivarman** the founder of **Utpala dynasty**. The king established his capital at Avantipura and built two temples ***Avantishvara and Avantisvamin***, one dedicated to Shiva and other dedicated to Vishnu.
- The final refinement of form and a more polished look may be seen in a group of temples erected by Sankaravarman (A.D.883-902), who succeeded Avantivarman.
- He shifted his capital to Sankarapattnam, modern pattern, and built two temples, ***Sugandhesha and Sankaragaurisha***. Both the temples are much on the same plan as described earlier but these structures reveal a refinement in handling the material, treatment of ornamentation and more polished look.

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- The former is of *panchyatana* type, surrounded by a cellular peristyle. The main shrine and the remains of two subsidiary shrines are the only surviving structures. Sankaragaurisha is an enlarged version of Sugendhesha and consists of a *garbhagriha* and *antarala.* Peristyle walls and superstructure are entirely lost.
- During subsequent years due to constant wars between the weak kings and kingdoms temple activity gradually started receding. By the beginning of the 10th century the growth of style had come to an end but small shrines were raised without any notable architectural development.

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Bullets

The main architectural features of the temples of Kashmir could be summed up in a nutshell as:

1. The temples face either east or west.
2. The temples have a straight-edged pyramidal roof in two tiers instead of curvilinear superstructure of the southern temples.
3. The triangular pediments enclosing trefoil riches are on all the four sides of the main shrine.
4. They have a cellular layout with a row of pillars – a feature, which is not reported elsewhere in India .
5. The double-chambered gateway matches the central shrine in scale and design. The temple walls in Kashmir are profusely carved.

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Temple Lists

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Guptas and Post Guptas

- **Bhitargaon Brick Temple**

- It is located in the town of Bhitargaon of Kanpur district in UP. This ancient religious edifice was built in the 6th century during the Gupta period. One of the oldest surviving Hindu pilgrimage centres, the temple comprises of a roof and is graced with an elevated shikhara. The 18th century however, caused certain injuries to its upper chamber.
- The ceilings of anteroom and the sanctum have domical vaults and the sanctum bears a resemblance to a tri-ratha. Bhitargaon Temple, known for its extraordinary architectural beauty, has well decorated walls with large niches, positioned between ornate pilasters.

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- The delicately sculptured walls illustrate interesting stories, myths and images of various divinities. Figures of birds, animals and beasts also adorn the beauty of the walls.
- The temple decked with the terracotta sculptures illustrate different secular and religious themes like images of Lord Ganesha, Mahishasur-mardani (Goddess Durga) and the river goddess. The mythological story of the abduction of Sita and the penance of Nara and Naryan have also been skilfully depicted.

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- **Deogarh Dashavatar Temple**

➢ One can observe the ruins of an excellent temple dedicated to Vishnu and numerous Jain temples. The Vishnu temple has been constructed during the Gupta rule. In the whole of North India, this excellent Vishnu Temple is the first Panchyatan temple.

➢ Carved panels are present in the terraced basement. The sculpted door, which is the entry point to the holy chamber, contains figures of Ganga and Yamuna. The Gajendramoksha Panel, the Nar Narayan Tapasya and the Anantshayi Vishnu are the three enormous sections, which mirrors the events from the Vaishnava mythical stories.

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- **Sirpur Temple**

- The archaeological remains in and around Sirpur consist of both Hindu and Buddhist monuments in the form of temples and monasteries. Among them, the most well preserved magnificent temple is the east-facing Lakshmana temple built by Vasata, the mother of Mahasivagupta Balarjuna in the 7 th century CE.
- The Lakshmana temple is located in the village Sirpur in Mahasmand district of Chhattisgarh.
- Sirpur is derived from the ancient name Sripura which was once the centre of power of South Kosalas during the rule of Sarabhapuriyas and Panduvamsis from 6 th to 8 th century CE.
- Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, this brick temple stands on a high massive platform accessible by steps in the north and the south. The plan of the temple consists of a garbagriha, antarala and a mandapa.
- The mandapa now in ruins, was originally upheld by stone pillars in rows. The exquisitely carved doorframe depicts figures of Seshasayi Vishnu along with his other incarnations. This temple is one among the best examples of brick temples of ancient India.

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Chalukyas

- The temple-building activity under the Chalukyas of Badami can be broadly divided into two stages. ***The first stage is represented by the temples at Aihole and Badami***. Aihole is a town of temples and contains no fewer than 70 structures, of which four are noteworthy.
- **Ladh Khan temple** is a flat roofed building.
- **Durga temple** was an experiment seeking to adopt the Buddhist chaitya to a Brahmanical temple.
- **Hucimaligudi** is very similar to the Durga temple, but smaller than it.
- **The Jaina temple of Meguti** shows some progress in the erection of structural temples, but it is unfinished.
- Of the temples at Badami, the **Melagitti Sivalaya** is a small but finely proportioned and magnificently located temple. A group of **four rock-cut halls at Badami** (three of them Hindu and one Jaina) are all of the same type. The workmanship in the caves is marked by a high degree of technical excellence. Though the front is very unassuming, the interior is treated with great skill and care in every detail.

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- ***The second stage is represented by the temples at Pattadakal.*** There are about ten temples here, four in the northern style and six in the southern style. In the Deccan both styles were used. There was even a tendency to combine the feature of the two styles (Vesara).
- ***The Papanatha temple (known Mukteshwara in inscription)*** is the most notable among the temples of the northern style, it also reveals attempts to combine northern and southern features in one structure.
- ***The Virupaksha temple*** was built by one of the queens of Vikramaditya II. Workmen brought from Kanchi were employed in its construction. Hence it is a direct imitation of the Kailasanatha temple which had come into existence in Kanchi some decades earlier.
- ***The Sangamesvara temple***, which was built some years before the above one, is more or less in the same style.

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- ***Jambulinga Temple*** is a small temple, which enshrines an exquisite image of Dancing Lord Shiva, with Goddess Parvati and his mount Nandi by his side. It has been built with a northern style tower, which has a horseshoearched projection on its facade.
- The second queen of Vikaramaditya II built ***Mallikarjuna Temple***, along with Virupaksha Temple, to commemorate the victory of the Chalukyas over the Pallavas. The largest of all Hindu temples at Pattadakal, the Mallikarjuna Temple is ornamented with rich sculptural works.

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Pallava Architecture

- The development of temple architecture, particularly Dravida style, under the Pallavas can be seen in four stages.

➢ **Mahendra Group :** The influence of the cave style of architecture is to be seen in this group. Examples: are the rock-cut temples at ***Bhairavakonda*** (North Arcot district), and ***Anantesvara temple at Undavalli*** (Guntur district).

➢ **Narasimha Group :** They comprises the rathas or monolithic temples, each of which is hewn out of a single rock-boulder. These monolithic temples are found at ***Mamallapuram***. The rathas, popularly called the Seven Pagodas, are actually eight in number. They are ***(1) Dharmaraja, (2) Bhima, (3) Arjuna, (4) Sahadeva, (5) Draupadi, (6) Ganesa, (7) Pidari and (8) Valaiyankuttai.***

➢ **Rajasimha Group :** There are five examples of this group—the at ***Mahabalipuram (Shore, Isvara and Mukunda temples)***, one at ***Panamalai in South Arcot***, and the temple of ***Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi***. Among all these, the most mature example is the last one.

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- ***Nandivarman Group :*** This group mostly consists of small temples except the ***Vaikuntaperumal temple*** at ***Kanchi*** and in no way forms an advance on the achievements of the previous age. But they are more ornate, resembling the Chola architecture. The best examples are the temples of ***Muktesvara and Matangesvara at Kanchi***, the ***Vadamalisvara at Orgadam (near Chingalput), and the Parasuramesvara at Gudimallam (near Renigunta).***

- The Pallavas also contributed to the development of sculpture in south India. The Pallava sculpture largely is indebted to the Buddhist tradition. It is more monumental and linear in form, thus avoiding the typical ornamentation of the Deccan sculpture. The best example is the ***'Descent of the Ganga'*** or '***Arjuna's Penance***' at **Mahabalipuram.**

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- ***Sittanavasal, near Pudukkottai*** in Tamil Nadu is renowned primarily for its ***rock-cut cave temple with its rare Jaina mural paintings***. The cave floor, in fact, provides slightly elevated beds and pillows carved out of rock, for use of the monks. There are about 17 beds, rectangular even-spaces; each with a sort of stone pillow.
- It is likely that on these rock beds the Jain ascetics performed austerities such askayotsarga and sallekhana (voluntary starvation leading to death). They represent one of the best cave paintings of early medieval India. These are example of rock-cut architecture based on Jain thought and ideologies.
- They have a close form of Ajanta and Bagh caves. The importance accorded to Sittanavasal is not because of its size or grandeur, but because of its significance in the history of development of Indian art and also because of its exquisite style of depiction, as evidenced by the fragments of its remnant murals.
- The Sittanavasal paintings are regarded as a surviving link between the Ajanta paintings (6 th century) and the Chola paintings of Thanjavur (11 th century). They are also classified with the Sigiriya (Srigiri) frescoes of Sri Lanka (5 th century) and the Bagh frescoes in Madhya Pradesh (sixth and seventh centuries)

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Chola Temple

- **Early Phase :**

➢ The Pudukkotai district in Tamil Nadu has an unusually large number of early Chola temples, which give us a good idea of the growth of the south Indian style of architecture from the Pallava period to the Chola period.

➢ Most important among them is undoubtedly the ***Vijayalaya Cholesvara temple at Narthamalai*** (***also called Melamalai***). Other important temples in this category are the ***Nagesvarasvami temple at Kumbhakonam***, ***Kuranganatha temple at Srinivasanallur***, the twin temples of ***Agastyisvara and Cholesvara at Tiruvalisvaram.***

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- **Mature Phase :**

➢ The best example is, however, the Siva (or the ***Brihadeesvara or the Rajarajesvara***) temple, built in 1009 by Rajaraja I, at Tanjore. It is a fitting memorial to the material achievements of the Cholas under Rajaraja I. Apart from being the tallest (216 feet) of all Indian temples of the medieval period, it is a masterpiece of south Indian architecture. In this temple, a carving of a man's head with a European hat is found on one side of the temple (in a subsidiary structure), which is believed to be that of ***Marco Polo*** (late 13 th century), the Venetian traveller.

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- The temple of ***Gangaikonda Cholapuram*** (also dedicated to Siva or ***Brihadesvara***), the creation of **Rajendra I**, was meant to excel its predecessor in every conceivable way. Erected around 1030, the greater elaboration in its appearance attests to the more affluent state of the Chola empire under Rajendra I. It is larger in plan though not as tall as the previous one.

- **Late Phase :**

- In this category, two Chola temples worth mentioning are the ***Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram*** (Tanjore District) and the ***Kampaharesvara temple at Tribhuvanam***.

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Hoysala Temples

- In many cases, the Hoyasala temples are not single but double, having all essential parts duplicated. One more noteworthy feature is that the temple itself appears to be the work of a sculptor and not of a builder.
- This is best illustrated in the ***Hoyasalesvara temple at Halebid***, whose plinth consists of nine bands and each band has thousands of decorative figures in various postures.
- Hence the Hoyasala temples have been aptly described as sculptors' architecture. There are a number of temples in the Mysore territory which exhibit amazing display of sculptural exuberance.
- The most typical and well known examples are the temples of ***Kesava at Somnathpur, Chenna Kesava at Belur*** and ***Hoyasalesvara at Halebid***. The ***Kesava temple at Somnathpur, near Seringapatnam,*** erected about 1268, is still in a perfect state.

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Ancient Indian Philosophies

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Introduction

- The Greek word "**Philo-sophia**" is the origin of the word "**philosophy**", which means "**love of wisdom**".
- This love for wisdom can take many forms — it can be the desire to understand oneself or others better; it can be the quest for truth, or simply the desire for living a good life.
- **Philosophy is a framework or set of principles to guide one's life**.
- **Indian philosophy** concerns the search for wisdom in an ancient and complex intellectual tradition.
- Philosophy arose in India as an **inquiry into the mystery of life** and **existence**.



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Indian Philosophy

- Indian Philosophy refers to several traditions of philosophical thought that originated in the Indian subcontinent.
- The Indian philosophy is categorized into **six Orthodox** and **three Heterodox** philosophies.
- The classification is based on accepting the authority of the Vedas.
- The **Orthodox school** of philosophy also called the **Aastika school** believes in the authority of Vedas.
- In contrast, the **Heterodox school** of philosophy, popularly known as the **Nastika school** rejects the principle of the authority of Vedas.

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Concepts of Indian Philosophy

Indian philosophy has been designated as **'darsana',** generally translated as philosophy, but it means **intuitive vision**.

The intuitive vision consists of wisdom about reality and the inner and outer secrets of human life. The interpretations of such wisdom form the basis of philosophical inquiry about metaphysical doctrines, logical truths, ethical codes, and religious practices**.**

- **Concept of Punarjanam:** According to Hindu theories of reincarnation or rebirth, individuals **repeatedly reincarnate**, pass through many cycles of births and deaths, and live in numerous bodies as they evolve from simple organisms to complex beings and finally into humans.

The cycle of rebirth ends when they achieve perfection and **'Moksha' (liberation).**

- **Concept of Rina:** Rina, meaning debt, is related to the sense of obligation of a man to his duties and to ensure continuity in tradition. The three major types of debts are **Guru Rina, Pitru Rina, and Deva Rina.** These debts in life have to be repaid by a man to attain **moksha (liberation).**

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Major schools agreed that man should strive for the fulfillment of **four goals**

Artha

Economic means or wealth

Kama

Emotional fulfillment, Pleasure

Dharma

Moral life

Moksha

Liberation

Types of Schools in Indian Philosophy

Orthodox school

(Astika School)

- Believes in the authority of Vedas.
- There are **six Orthodox schools** of Indian philosophy.
- **Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vedanta, Vaisheshika, and Mimamsa**

Heterodox school

(Nastika School)

- **Rejects the principle of the authority of Vedas.**
- There are **three Heterodox schools** of Indian philosophy.
- **Charvaka-Ajivikas, Jain Philosophy,Buddhist doctrine.**

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Orthodox School

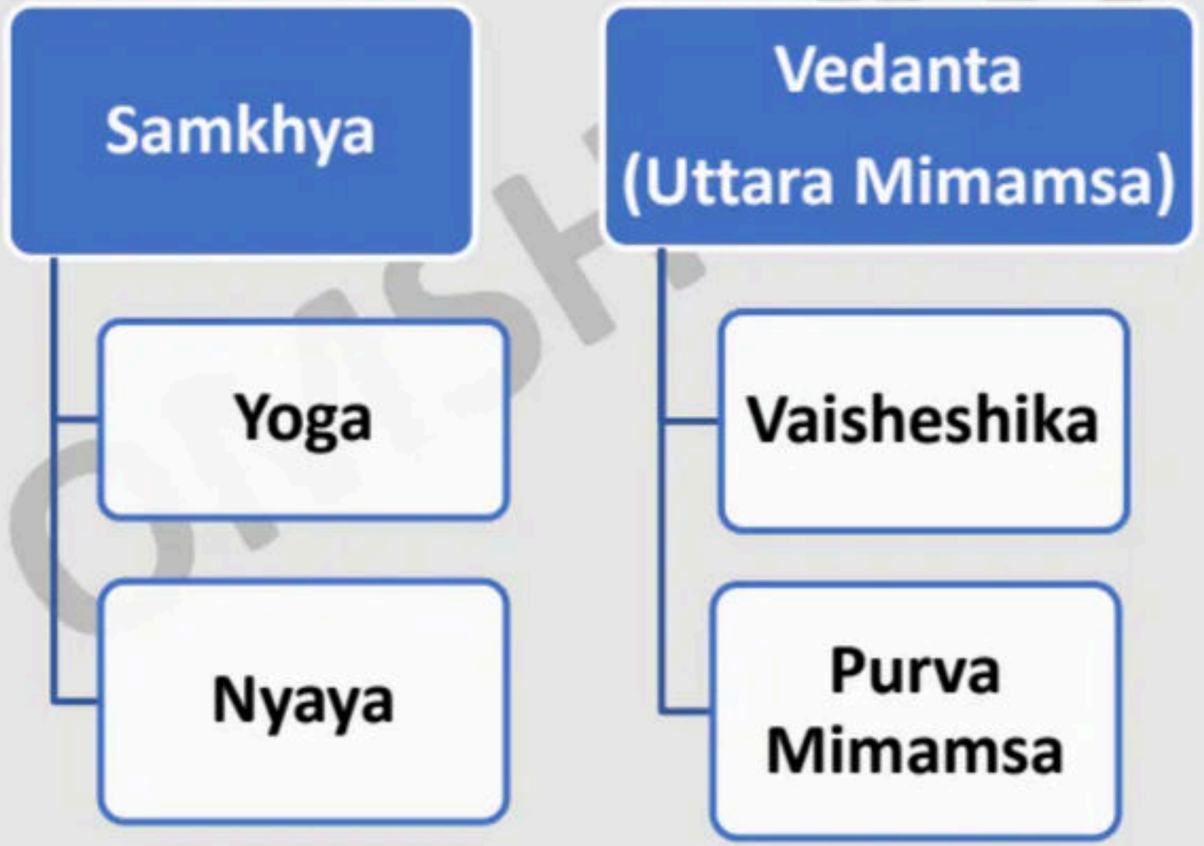
- This school believed that **Vedas were the supreme revealed scriptures** that held the secret to **salvation.**
- They never questioned the Vedas' authenticity.
- They take the ancient Vedas as their source and scriptural authority.
- The main Hindu orthodox **(astika) schools** of Indian philosophy were codified during the medieval period of **Brahmanic-Sanskritic scholasticism.**
- Indian philosophy deals with numerous topics, namely: **existence, consciousness, knowledge, and freedom**.
- **Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vedanta, Vaisheshika, and Mimamsa**, are the six systems of Indian philosophy. Each one of these branches aims for self-understanding and the improvement of one's condition through attaining wisdom and improving human life.

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Six Shada Darshana

Philosophy has six divisions-**Shada-darsana**-the six Darsanas or ways of seeing things, usually called the six systems or **six different schools of thought**. The six schools of philosophy are the six instruments of true teaching or the six demonstrations of Truth. Each school has developed, systematised and correlated the various parts of the Veda in its own way.



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Samkhya

- It is considered as the oldest philosophical tradition.
- **Sage Kapila** is traditionally credited as a **founder of** the **Samkhya.**
- **Core Philosophy:** It postulates that everything, in reality, stems from **Purusha** (self or soul or mind) and **Prakriti** (matter, creative agency, energy), and which attempts to develop metaphysics based on this duality.
- Samkhya posits the **existence of an infinite number of similar but separate purushas**, none superior to any other.
- The Samkhya is a dualistic realism philosophy, **Advaita Vedanta** derives its base from this school.
- Samkhya's tendency of thought pervades all the literature of ancient India, including the **Srutis, Smritis, and Puranas.**
- According to tradition, the first work of the Samkhya School is the **Samkhya-sutra.**
- It accepts only **three** types of **knowledge (pramana):**

  Pratyaksha: Perception

  Anumana: Inference

  Shabda: Hearing

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Nyaya

- **Sage Gautama** is traditionally credited as the **founder of** the **Nyaya School.**
- **Core philosophy:** They believe in the technique of **logical thinking** to achieve salvation.
- The term 'Nyaya' means **"justice", "rules", "method" or "judgment".**
- The Nyaya school's epistemology considers four of the six **pramanas** as trustworthy ways of getting knowledge. They are:

  Pratyakṣa (perception)

  Upamana (comparison and analogy)

  Anumana (inference to attain true knowledge)

  Sabda (word, testimony of past or present reliable experts)
- Four sources of invalid knowledge: **memory, doubt, error** (false certainty), and **hypothetical argument** ("If there was no fire, there wouldn't be smoke, but there is smoke, so there must be fire").
- The Nyaya School terms ignorance as **Mithya Gyan** (false knowledge).

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Yoga

- **Sage Patanjali** is the founder of Yoga.
- **Core philosophy:** It postulates that one can **achieve salvation** by combining **meditation and physical application.**
- It is closely related to the **Samkhya school of Hinduism**.
- Yoga acknowledges **God's existence** as a teacher and guide.
- **View of Patanjali:** Yoga does not mean union but the spiritual effort to attain perfection through controlling the body, senses, and mind and through right discrimination between **Purusa and Prakrti.**
- Patanjali's Yoga sutra is divided into four sections:

  Samadhi-pada: Nature and aim of concentration.

  Sadhanapada: Means to realize this end.

  Vibhutipada: Supra-normal powers that can be acquired through Yoga.

  Kaivalyapada: Nature of liberation and the reality of the transcendental self.

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- The prescribed **eight sadhanas** to achieve mukti or freedom are:
  - **Yama:** Self-restrained
  - **Niyama:** Positive rules of conduct
  - **Pratyahara:** Choosing an object
  - **Dharna:** Fixing the mind on the object of meditation
  - **Dhyana:** Meditation(undisturbed flow of thought)
  - **Samadhi:** Completely absorbed in the object of meditation
  - **Asanas:** Steady and comfortable posture
  - **Prayanams:** Breathing exercises
- There are various practices within Hinduism, but the majority follow one of **four main paths** (margs). Since these four margs are aimed at union (with God), they are also referred to as "yogas." They are as follows:
  - **Karma-yoga** (the path of action)
  - **Jnana-yoga** (the path of Knowledge)
  - **Raja (ashtanga) yoga** (the path of meditation)
  - **Bhakti-Yoga** (the path of devotion)

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Vaisheshika

- It was founded by **Sage Kanada.**
- **Core philosophy:** All objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of **atoms.** Brahman is regarded as the fundamental force in these atoms that causes consciousness.
- **The Vaisheshika** school of Hinduism, like **Buddhism**, accepted only two **reliable means to knowledge: perception and inference**
- Vaisheshika School is known for its insights into **naturalism.**
- According to the Vaisheshika school, the **laws of Karma guide this universe.**
- They contended that the Universe was created by the **five main elements** known as **Dravya** (fire, air, water, earth, and sky).
- The Vaisheshika system is considered conducive to studying all systems.
- Its primary goal is to deal with categories and reveal its atomistic pluralism.
- All knowledge must necessarily point to an object of knowledge, which is referred to as a Padartha.

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Purva Mimamsa

It was propounded by **Sage Jaimini.**

Core Philosophy: Mimamsa philosophy is the analysis of interpretation, application, and use of the text of the Samhita and Brahmana portions of the Veda.

It emphasizes the **power of yajnas and mantras** in sustaining the activities of the universe.

This school of thought **believes in the complete authority of Vedas.**

This school of thought states that a human being **can attain salvation only by acting in conformity with the principles of the Vedas.**

According to Mimamsa philosophy, Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge, and religion means the fulfillment of duties prescribed by the Vedas.

It says that the essence of the Vedas is dharma. By the execution of dharma, one earns merit which leads one to heaven after death.

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Vedanta or Uttara Mimamsa

It was propounded by Sage **Vyasa.**

Core Philosophy: Brahm is the reality of life, and everything else is unreal. They equalize **atma** and **Brahm,** and if a person attains the knowledge of the self, he would automatically understand Brahm and achieve **salvation**.

The term Vedanta means in Sanskrit the **"conclusion" (anta) of the Vedas,**

It applies to the Upanishads and the school that arose from the study (*Mimamsa*) of the Upanishads.

They believed in the theory of punarjanama.

The text **Brahmasutra of Badrayana** formed the basis of this philosophy.

Thus, Vedanta is also referred to as **Vedanta Mimamsa** ("Reflection on Vedanta"), **Uttara Mimamsa** ("Reflection on the Latter Part of the Vedas"), and **Brahma Mimamsa** ("Reflection on Brahman").

The three fundamental Vedanta texts are:

Upanishads, **Bhagavadgita**, and **Brahma-sutras**.

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Main traditions of Vedanta

Advaita

Adi Shankaracharya

Dvaitadvaita

Nimbarka

Shuddhadvaita

Vallabha

Vishishtadvaita

Ramanuja

Tattvavada

Madhvacharya

Achintya-Bheda-Abheda

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

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Uttara Mimamsa

Uttara Mimamsa is the Vedanta, one of the most significant of all Indian philosophies.

The four Vedas are: **Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda**. Each of the Vedas is divided into four parts: **The Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads**.

The Upanishads are the concluding parts of the Vedas. They expound the supreme philosophical knowledge. The word '**Vedanta**' usually refers to the Upanishads. The word is a compound of '*Veda*' and '*Anta*'. It means the ending portion of the Vedas. The great scholar **Badarayana**(500-200 B.C) initiated the efforts to simplify the Upanishadic philosophy. **Badarayana is also known as Ved Vyasa**. He was the first scholar to take up the challenging task of systemizing the immensely vast philosophical doctrines of the Upanishads.

Badarayana's work is known as **Brahma-Sutra or Vedanta-Sutra**. It is also referred to as Uttar-Mimamsa-Sutra. The Brahma-Sutra has 555 sutras.

Hence, several commentaries were written to interpret them. Among these, the commentaries of **Shankaracharya, Ramnujacharya, and Madhavacharya** are regarded as authentic and are held in very high view. They are regarded as the greatest scholars of Indian philosophy. They are not only the principal commentators of Brahma-Sutra (Vedanta-Sutra) but are also its leading interpreters. Thus, we have three major schools of Vedanta based on the philosophy of the distinguished trio: **Advaita(non-dualism) of Shankaracharya, Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) of Ramnujacharya and Dvaita(dualism) of Madhvacharya.**

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All three schools are founded on the **Vedanta philosophy**. However, there have been differences among them. Even the followers of a particular system, within their own fold, differ to some degree on certain issues.

The Vedanta philosophy is focused on the **Jagat** (the universe), the **Jiva** (individual soul) and the **Brahman** (the Supreme Being).

Brahman is the repository of all knowledge and power. Jivas are trapped in the Jagat. Attached to the physical world and driven by passions and desires, they remain chained to ceaseless actions (karma). As a result, they subject themselves to countless births in various forms. Their transmigration from this birth (life) to the next depends on karma (the quality of action). Moksha or mukti (liberation) is the goal of life. This philosophy, in general, is accepted by all three schools.

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Advaita Vedanta

- It was propounded by **Adi Shankaracharya.**
- **Advaita Vedanta (Advait: Not two i.e monistic system)**
- The earliest formal exposition of Advaita or non-dualistic Vedanta was put forward by Gaudapada in the 7th or 8th century in his Mandukyakarika, a verse commentary on the Mandukya Upanishad.
- Gaudapada was influenced by Madhyamika and Vijnanavada Buddhism. He held that worldly objects were similar to things seen in a dream.
- Reality is one (a-dvaita), and the idea of plurality is due to Maya (illusion born out of ignorance).
- Gaudapada's ideas were developed further by Shankara, who tried to demonstrate that the Upanishads and Brahmasutras contained a systematic, unified philosophy. His major work is his bhashya (commentary) on the Brahma Sutra.
- According to Shankara, the performance of Vedic sacrifices was for people who wanted to attain material, worldly gains, but the Upanishads contained the way to supreme knowledge. In his monistic doctrine, brahman is the ultimate reality. It is without qualities (nirguna). It is pure consciousness, eternal and unchanging. All change and plurality are only apparent.

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- Shankara identified **two levels of reality—conventional reality and absolute reality**.
- An example he gave to illustrate this idea is that of a person looking at a coiled rope and thinking that it is a snake. The rope seems like a real snake, but it is not one. The reason for mistaking conventional reality for absolute reality is ignorance (avidya).
- The goal of Advaita Vedanta is liberation from the **cycle of rebirth**, which consists of the realization of the oneness of the atman with Brahman.
- Shankara's vigorous espousal of a philosophy whose roots lay in the Vedic tradition is seen by some scholars as a key factor in the decline of Buddhism in India.
- On the other hand, it is interesting to note that his critics referred to him as a **'hidden Buddhist'.** This is because his treatment of the world as an illusion struck them as rather similar to the ideas of the Mahayana schools.
- However, it should be noted that while defending his interpretation of the Upanishadic doctrine, Shankara also countered objections that could be raised against it by proponents of other schools, putting forward a strong critique of the viewpoints of Buddhist schools as well as other schools such as Samkhya, Nyaya, and Mimamsa. Shankara is supposed to have founded the Dashanami sect and to have established four or five monasteries known as the Amanaya Mathas.

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Vishishtadvaita

It was propounded by **Ramanuja.**

Ramanuja's guru was Yadava Prakasa, a scholar who was a part of the more ancient Advaita Vedanta monastic tradition. Ramanuja disagreed with his guru and the non-dualistic Advaita Vedanta, and instead followed in the footsteps of Tamil Alvars tradition, the scholars **Nathamuni and Yamunacharya.**

According to him, God is **Saguna Brahman**. The creative process and all the objects in creation are real but not illusory as was held by Sankaracharya. Therefore, God, soul, and matter are real. But God is an inner substance and the rest are his attributes.

In Vishista Advaita, the **world and Brahman are also considered two equally real entities, as in dualism, but here the world is not separate from Brahman but is formed out of Brahman.**

In Vishista Advaitavada, Brahman is a personal god with omniscient qualities. He has created the world, but he has created the world out of his self. Thus, the world bears to Brahman the relation of the part to the whole or the relation of a 'qualified effect' to the base (hence qualified monism). The famous analogy given for this is the sea and wave – Brahman is the sea and the objects of the world, both nonliving and the living souls, are like waves upon this sea. All waves are ultimately the sea only, but as long as we see the wave we think it to be different from the sea. The wave is of name and form only. Other analogies given for this are gold and gold jewelry, clay and clay pots, the spider and his web, etc.

Brahman as defined by Ramanuja is an entirely personal God. **Ramanuja considered Brahman to be Vishnu or one of his avatars.**

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- Brahman as defined by Ramanuja is an entirely personal God. Ramanuja considered Brahman to be Vishnu or one of his avatars.
- The practice of religion in Vishista Advaita is similar to Dualism, and the only difference is that mankind enjoys a higher status than in pure dualistic worship and is nearer to God.
- Thus, in Vishista Advaita, although both the **world and Brahman are considered equally real**, they are not considered two separate entities as in Dualism.
- He also advocated **prabattimarga** or the path of self-surrender to God. He invited the downtrodden to Vaishnavism and advocated salvation by bhakti. He wrote:

  Sribhashya

  Vedanta dipa

  Gita Bhasya

  Vedantasara

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Dvaitadvaita

- It was propounded by **Nimbarka.**
- He was the younger contemporary of Ramanujam who propounded the Dvaita Advaita philosophy and the philosophy of **Bheda Abheda** (difference/ non–difference). According to him, Brahman or the supreme soul transforms itself into the souls of the world, which are therefore real, distinct, and different from Brahman.
- Like Vishista Advaita, the Bheda Abheda school also believes that the world and Brahman are both equally real, and that the world is a part of Brahman. The difference is in emphasis only.
- The same analogy of sea and wave, clay and pot, etc. is used here. **A particular analogy of Bhed Abheda is the sun and the sunbeam.**
- The sunbeam cannot be called separate from the sun, it arises from the sun, and is attached to it. Yet it is not the sun either, it is only a part of the sun, a reflection of the sun, and it gives only a part view of the sun. Hence the world also is but a manifestation of Brahman, but it is a very small manifestation, and the difference with Brahman is very large.
- His most famous work is the **Vedanta-parijata-saurabha**, a commentary on the Brahma-sutras.

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Shuddhadvaita

- It was propounded by **Vallabhacharya.**
- In Shuddhadvaita, as in Vishishta Advaita, the world is taken to have a real existence, as also Brahman. But it is said that there is no change of Brahman in the world, the world exists as it were as an aspect of Brahman without undergoing any change, it is a part of Brahman.
- We may consider it like two sides of a coin, with Brahman as one side and the world as another side. There is no change — the world is a part of the coin that is Brahman.
- Hence, this is called **'Shudh Advaita' because it is said that there is only one and there is no change**.
- However, we see that though **Shudhadvaita calls itself monism**, it recognizes the presence of both, the world and Brahman, as being equally real. Hence, there are two realities.
- Hence, even if we say that it is a part of Brahman, the world does exist as a different reality from Brahman, the other side of the coin as it were. So it is a branch of Vishista Advaita, in that it recognizes both the world and Brahman as being two equally real existences, though it emphasizes the non-difference more by saying that the world is an inseparable, unchanged aspect of Brahman. Thus it tends more towards pure Advaita than the Vishista Advaita of Ramanuja. Its **philosophy is Pushtimarg.**

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Achintya-Bheda-Abheda

- It was propounded by **Chaitanya**.
- He was the founder of the **Gaudia Vaishnav** (or Neo-Vaishnavite) movement.
- Chaitanya Deva was the proponent of Achintya-Bheda-Abheda which is a school of Vedanta representing the philosophy of inconceivable one-ness and difference.
- It states that the **soul or energy of God is both distinct and non-distinct from God, whom he identified as Krishna, Govinda**, and that this, although unthinkable, may be experienced through a process of loving devotion (bhakti).

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Conclusion

- The ultimate or the prime purpose of life according to the Indian doctrine is to be in harmony with reality's inherent essence and to be free of suffering.
- Indian philosophy is sometimes called a **treasure house of wisdom**. It encompasses the religious, spiritual, philosophical, and scientific views of Hinduism. However, it also incorporates Jainism and Buddhist philosophies which are not part of any other Indian tradition. Despite the diversity in this vast subject area, some aspects link all of the Indian philosophies together, like the concept of Dharma.
- Most of the philosophical schools that existed in India were not confined to one specific religion. Religion was just one among various factors that caused the evolution of various philosophical movements of Indian tradition. For example, **Jainism and Buddhism are different religions** but they share some of the core principles of Indian doctrine.

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BHAKTI CULT

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INTRODUCTION

- Between the heterodox religions like Buddhism and Jainism on the one extreme, and the orthodox Vedic religion on the other, there grew up certain religious systems which were destined to become popular soon. These religious sects had no faith in the mechanical system of worship prescribed in the Vedas.
- But while they agreed with Buddhism and Jainism to a large extent, they did not share the atheistic world view of these two religions. The new theistic religions centered round the idea of a supreme God conceived as Vishnu, Siva, Shakti or some other form.
- Salvation was possible through his grace (prasada) alone, and this could be attained only by bhakti, that is, intense love and devotion leading to complete surrender of self to God.

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- From the 7th century onwards, the Bhakti cult spread throughout India, and especially in south.
- Bhakti meant that people made all kinds of offerings to the god in return for which they received the *prasada* or the favour of the god. This implied the total surrender of the devotees to their god.
- According to R.S. Sharma this practice is comparable to the complete dependence of the tenants on the landowners. Just as the tenants offered and provided various services to the lord and then recieved land and protection as a kind of favour from him, a similar relation came to be established between the individual and his god. As elements of feudalism persisted in the country for a very long time, Bhakti became deeply embedded in the Indian ethos.

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Vaishnavism

- The rise and growth of Vaishnavism was closely connected with that of Bhagavatism. Vaishnavism, having its origins in the pre-Gupta period, began to capture and absorb Bhagavatism during the Gupta period.
- This process of capture and absorption was completed by the end of the late Gupta period, and in fact the name mostly used to designate Bhagavatism from this period onwards was Vaishnavism, indicating the predominance of the later Vedic Vishnu element in it with emphasis on the doctrine of incarnations.

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Vaishnava Cults

1.Bhagavatas

- The Bhagavata and Pancharatra initially cults were separate, the Pancharatras worshipping the deified sage Narayana, and the Bhagavatas worshipping the deified Vrisni hero Vasudeva. The two sects were later amalgamated in an attempt to identify Narayana and Vasudeva.
- The Bhagavata is a theistic devotional cult which originated several centuries before the Christian era. It is based mainly on the Bhagavad Gita, but later Bhagavata Purana and Vishnu Purana became its main texts.
- When the Bhagavata cult reached its peak during the second century AD, it came to be generally known as the **Pancharatra Agama**. The name means 'five nights', but its significance is unknown.
- The adherence of the Rajput kings to Bhagavatism further spread to the whole of India. In southern India, in the Tamil land, the Bhagavata movement was spread largely by the twelve Alvars. They flourished from the eighth to the early nineth century. The Alvars belonged to various classes of society. Among them were king of Malabar, a famous woman, Andal, to whom a magnificent temple was later built at her birthplace, Srivilliputtur, by a low caste man; and a repentant sinner.
- After the Alvars came the Acharyas who united devotion with knowledge and karma.

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2.Pancharatras

- According to tradition the Pancharatra teachings were first systematised in about 100 AD by **Sandilya**, who stressed the need for *total devotion to Vasudeva Krishna.*
- A cosmological basis was given to Vasudeva Krishna by identifying him and the members of his family with *specific cosmic emanations* **(vyuhas):** this was an important tenet of the early *Pancharatras* and of the later *Sri Vaishnava cult*. The 'emanatory theory' developed early in the Christian era, about the same time as the theory of incarnation.
- The Pancharatras postulate a supreme Brahman, who reveals himself as *Vishnu, Vasudeva and Narayana* and whose power gives birth to the universe. At the beginning of Time, the supreme aspect of Vasudeva created from himself the ***vyuha Sarnkarshana*** (a name of Krishna's brother) identified with *primal matter* (***prakriti***). From these two combines, Krishna's son Pradyumna was produced and identified with mind (***manas***). From these arose *Aniruddha* (Krishna's grandson) identified with ***self-consciousness*** (***ahankara***).

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- From the last two sprang the five elements (***panchabhutas***) and their qualities (***mahabhutas***) simultaneously with Brahma who fashioned the earth and everything in it from these elements.
- The last three emanations are regarded not only as aspects of the divine character, but as gods in their own right. Thus paradoxically the gods are both one and many. Later their worship declined when the concept of Vishnu's incarnations became popular and dominated Vaishnavism during the Gupta Age.
- All the above deified heroes were worshipped in the Mathura region by people of ***Yadava-Satvata Vrisni*** origin (Krishna was a Yadava), and the teaching was carried to western India and northern Deccan by migrating ***Yadava tribes***.

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3. Vaikhanasas

- This ritualistic cult was founded by the legendary Vikhanas whose teaching was disseminated by four ancient sages: ***Atri, Marici, Bhrigu and Kasyapa.***
- Initially the cult formed part of the ***Taittiriya school of the Black Yajur Veda***, but later it became an orthodox ***Vaishnava cult.*** In its main text, the ***Vaikhanasa Sutra*** (dated about the 3 rd century AD), the cult of the Vedic solar Vishnu coalesces with that of Narayana.
- Vaikhanasa ritual theory is based on the five-fold conception of Vishnu as ***brahman*** (the supreme deity); as ***purusha***, as ***satya***, as ***achyuta*** (the immutable) and as ***aniruddha*** (the irreducible aspect). Performing the fivefold ritual expiates evil and bestows happiness on everyone.
- Vishnu's ***dasavataras*** are also worshipped for specific purposes. Image worship is important in this movement and is said to be a development of symbolic Vedic ritual. From the end of the tenth century Vaikhanasa priests were in charge of Vaishnava temples and shrines. Although somewhat eclipsed by the rise of the Sri Vaishnava cult, the priests still perform rituals in the Sanskrit language at some temples, including the Venkatesvara temples at Tirupati and Kanchi.

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Alvars or Vaishnava Saints

- The history of Vaishnavism from the post-Gupta period till the first decade of the 13th century CE is concerned mostly with south India. Vaishnava saints, popularly known as Alvars in south India, preached one-souled, loving adoration for Vishnu, and their songs in Tamil were collectively named ***Prabhandhas***.
- Among the 12 Alvars, the most famous are Nammalvar and Tirumalai Alvar.

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Vaishnava Acharyas or Teachers

- The wave of Vishnubhakti of the Alvars was supplemented on its *doctrinal side* by a class of Vaishnava teachers, popularly known as the Vaishnava Acharyas in south India.
- **Ramanuja**, one of the early great Acharyas, along with **Yamunacharya** (another important early Acharya) developed the doctrine of **Visishtadvaita** (qualified non-dualism) on the basis of some Upanishadic texts in opposition to ***Sankaracharya's*** Advaitavada or nondualism.
- Two other Vaishnava Acharyas of south India, who lived after ***Ramanuja,*** were ***Madhvacharya and Nimbarka***. The former founded the ***Dvaitavada*** (dualism) and the latter ***Dvaitadvaitavada*** (dualistic non-dualism) in Vaishnavism.
- Thus, while the Alvars represented the emotional side of south Indian Vaishnavism, the Acharyas represented its intellectual aspect.

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BHAKTI SAINT-PHILOSOPHERS OF SOUTH INDIA

❖ **Ramanuja (11th century) :**He gave a sound philosophic basis to the bhakti cult of the Vaishnavas by founding the philosophy of ***Visishtadvaita*** (Modified Monism).

- According to it, god is ***saguna***. The creative process and all the objects in creation are real, but not illusory as was held by Sankaracharya (founder of Advaita or Non-dualism). T
- Therefore, not only god but also the soul and matter are real. However, god is the inner substance, whereas the rest (soul and matter) are his attributes and hence they are dependent on him.
- Ramanuja was followed by several other saint philosophers who combined erudite scholarship with abiding faith in the ***prapathimarga*** (path of self-surrender to god).

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❖ **Madhavacharya (13th century) :**He was the founder of the ***Dvaita (Dualism)*** school of philosophy. According to it, the world is not an illusion but a reality, full of real distinctions.

- God, soul and matter are all unique in nature, and hence they are irreducible to each other.

❖ **Nimbarka (13th and 14th centuries) :** He advocated another school of philosophy, called ***Dvaitadvaita*** (Dualistic Monism). According to it, the Brahman or the Supreme Being transforms himself into the souls and the world, which are therefore real, distinct and different from the Brahman. Though they (soul and world) are real and different from the Brahman, they cannot, however, exist independently without his support.

❖ **Vallabhacharya (15 and 16th centuries) :** He was the founder of yet another school of philosophy, called the ***Suddhadvaita*** (Pure NonDualism). According to it, god is one, omnipotent and omniscient and the cause of all that there is in the universe. He manifests himself in the form of individual souls and matter (world).

- Thus, the three (god, soul and world) are identical in essence though different in manifestation. At the same time it should be kept in mind that god is pure (suddha) in himself and does not undergo any change or transformation, though he is the cause of everything in the universe. Vallabha's teachings are also known ***as pustimarga or the path of grace.***
- All the above saint-philosophers belonged to Vaishnavism. Ramanuja was a Tamilian and Madhava was a Kannadiga, while Nimbarka and Vallabha were Telugus.

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Shaivism

- Saivism flourished under the Gupta dynasty although most of them were Vaishnavas. In south India, the Pallava king Mahendravarman I was at first a Jaina and later a Saiva.
- Royal patronage greatly increased the popularity of Saivism, as did the mystical and devotional poems composed by the sixty three Saiva Nayanars (also called Adiyars).
- Saivism in south India, like Vaishnavism, flourished in the beginning through the activities of Saiva saints, popularly called the Navanars. Their poetry in Tamil was called ***Tevaram*** (also known as ***Dravida Veda***). There are 63 Nayanars, the most important among them being ***Tirujnana Sambandhar and Tirunavukkarasu*** (popularly known as 'Appar').

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Saiva Acharyas or Teachers

- The emotional Saivism preached by the Nayanars was supplemented on the doctrinal side by a large number of Saiva intellectuals (Acharyas) who were associated with several forms of Saiva movements like ***Agamanta, Suddha*** and ***Virasaiva.***
- The ***Agamantas*** based their tenets mainly on the 28 agamas which explain the various aspects of Siva. ***Aghora Sivacharya*** was one of their best exponents.
- ***The Suddhasaivas*** upheld Ramanuja's teachings and ***Srikanta Sivacharya*** was their great expounder.
- The ***Virasaivas or Lingayats*** were led by **Basava** (a minister of Chalukya king Bijjala Raya of the 12 th century AD). Basava used his political power and position in furthering the cause of this movement which was both a social and religious reform movement. These people were also influenced by Ramanuja's teachings.

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Saiva Cults

1. Pasupatas

- This is probably the earliest known Saiva cult. The cult flourished in Orissa and in western India from the 7 th to the 11 th centuries.
- The founder of the Pasupata cult was ***Lakulisa***, stated to be born in Gujarat, said to be an incarnation of Siva.
- Lakulisa's special emblem was a club (lakuta) which sometimes symbolises the phallus.
- He is usually depicted *naked and ithyphallic*. The latter state does not signify sexual excitement but sexual restraint by means of yogic techniques.
- The cult's main text is the Pasupata Sutra attributed to Lakulisa. It is primarily concerned with ritual and discipline. According to a 4th century inscription (Mathura) Lakulisa had four chief disciples who founded four subsects.
- A number of Pasupata temples were established in northern India from about the 6 th century onwards, but by the 11 th century the movement was in decline.
- The ultimate aim of the cult is to attain eternal union with Siva and thereby overcome all pain and suffering. Also the Pasupata movement is the only one to link liberation with the attainment of paranormal powers.

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2. Kapalikas and Kalamukhas

- These are two extreme Tantric cults, which flourished, from about the 10 th to the 13 th century, mainly in Karnataka. They were probably off-shoots of the Pasupata movement.
- They reduced the diversity of creation into two elements–the Lord and creator and the creation that emanated from him.
- Unfortunately none of their works are extant, sensational and disparaging allusions are made to them in the Puranas and other literature belonging to the seventh century and later.
- According to a few inscriptions and literary references the Kapalikas originated in about the 6 th century in the Deccan or in south India.
- By the 8^{th} century they began to spread northwards; but by the 14^{th} century they had almost died out, their decline being hastened by the rise of the popular Lingayat movement, or perhaps they merged with other Saivite Tantric orders such as the Kanphatas and the Aghoris.

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- The Kapalikas (Skull-bearers) were adherents of an ancient ascetic order centred on the worship of the terrifying aspects of Siva, namely, Mahakala and Kapalabhrit (he who carries a skull) and Bhairava. They were preoccupied with magical practices, and attaining the 'perfections' (siddhis).
- All social and religious conventions were deliberately flouted. They ate meat, drank intoxicants, and practised ritual sexual union as a means of achieving consubstantiality with Siva. The devotees ate from bowls fashioned from human skull and worshipped Siva. They would carry a triple staff, pot, and a small staff with a skull-shaped top (khatvanja).
- The Kalamukhas flourished in the Karnataka area from about the 11th to the 13th century. They drank from cups fashioned from human skull as a reminder of man's ephemeral nature, and smeared their bodies with the ashes of cremated corpses.
- The teachings of both cults are similar. Both took the 'Great Vow' (mahavrata) whose significance is now unknown, and yoga was mandatory. Human sacrifices and wine were offered to Bhairava and his consort Chandika.

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3. Agoris

- This was a Tantric movement, now extinct, and said to have consisted of two branches–the pure (suddha) and the dirty (malin). Aghoris were the successors of the Kapalika cult.
- Among the female divinities worshipped were Sitala, Parnagiri Devi (the tutelary goddess of ascetics) and Kali. Gurus were highly venerated as is usual in Tantrism.
- No religious or caste distinctions were allowed, nor was image-worship, and all adherents were required to be celibate.
- Cannibalism, animal sacrifices and other cruel rites were practised. All kinds of refuse was eaten including excrement (but never horse meat). As excrement is seen to fertilise the soil, so eating it was thought to 'fertilise' the mind and render it capable of every kind of meditation.
- The Aghoris led the wandering life of vagabonds. Each guru was accompanied by a dog, as was Siva in his Bhairava aspect. The Aghori yogins were buried and not cremated, and were believed to be in a state of eternal, deep meditation.

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4. Kanphata Yogis or Gorakhnathis

- Gorakhnath, a native of eastern Bengal, reorganised the earlier teaching of this movement. He is identified with Siva by his followers. Gorakhnath was accredited with great magical and alchemical powers.
- He synthesised the Pasupata teachings with those of ***Tantrism and Yoga.***
- This extreme order of ascetics is characterised by their split ears (kan 'ear', phata 'split') and huge ear rings of agate, horn or glass, conferred on them at their initiation.
- The Yogis practised ritual copulation in graveyards and sometimes cannibalism. The ultimate aim of the devotee is to attain eternal union with Siva by means of Yogic techniques. Some texts mention 32 yogic positions (asanas); the Siva Samhita lists 84, all having magical and hygienic value. Some destroy sickness, old age and death, while other confer spiritual perfections (siddhis).

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- The 9 nathas and 84 siddhas play an important part in the movement and a lot of folklore is associated with them. Gorakhnath's teaching is universal and hence opposed to caste distinctions. There are few prohibitions concerning food, except that beef and pork are forbidden. But spirits and opium may be consumed and Yogis are allowed to marry.
- The dead are buried in the posture of meditation for they are permanently in ***samadhi,*** and hence their tombs are called ***samadh.*** Representations of the linga and yoni are placed above the tomb. Kanphata Yogis officiate in temples dedicated to Bhairava, Sakti or Devi, and Siva. At one time the Gorakhnathis were associated with the Aghoris.

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5. Agamantas or Saiva Siddhantas

- This is an important south Indian system of pluralistic realism. It recognises the reality of the world and the plurality of souls. This movement developed partly from the songs of the early Saiva saints and partly from the fine devotional poetry of the Nayanars (from the 7 th to the 10 th century).
- The four classes of authoritative texts of the cult are the **Vedas**, the twenty eight **Saiva Agamas**, the twelve **Thirumurai**; and the fourteen **Saiva Siddhanta Sastras**. Although the Vedas are highly regarded, the esoteric Agamas are of greater importance having been revealed by Siva himself to his devotees.
- The Siddhanta Sastras were written during the 13^{th} and the early 14^{th} century by a succession of various teachers, most of whom were non-Brahmins and of lowly origin. The Tamil texts and poems include those written by the three great Saiva teachers—**Appar, Tirujnana-Sambandhar and Sundaramurti.**
- The first teacher of Tamil Saivism was **Meykandar,** (13 th century, his work being the **Siva jnana bodham**). But the founder was Aghora Sivacharya. The Saiva Siddhanta goal is a state of eternal bliss, the experience of unity-in-duality. Today Saiva Siddhanta flourishes mostly in Tamil-speaking areas including northern Ceylon.

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6. Kashmiri Saivism

- This is a monistic system, also called the Trika ('three-fold') system expounded in Kashmir by **Abhinava Gupta (c. 975-1025 CE)** who based his exposition on the teachings of earlier sages. He composed a number of commentaries on the now lost **Sivadrishti of Somananda**, from whom he was fourth in succession. Fortunately, a summary of this work (Somananda's) was composed by **Utpaladeva (c. 925-975 CE),** entitled the **Pratyabhijna Sutras**.
- However, the earliest teacher was **Vasugupta** who lived in the 9 th century and founded the **Pratyabhijna school**. He taught that the soul gains knowledge by means of *intense yogic meditation*.
- The name **Trika** refers to the three-fold scripture drawn from the non canonical ***Agamas.*** The system was influenced by ***Samkhya, Advaita Vedanta and Pancharatra doctrines***. Initiation in this system is of foremost importance. By means of Siva's divine grace the aspirant finds a true guru who initiates him. Thus the 'power of activity' (***kriyasakti***) is awakened in his soul, and this leads ultimately to liberation.

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7. Suddhasaivas or Shiva Advaita

- A system expounded by ***Srikanta***, it has some features similar to those of Shaiva Siddhanta and Kashmiri Saivism, as well as some unique characteristics.
- Srikanta's teaching is based on the Vedantasara.
- The Supreme Siva (Para-Shiva) is identified with Brahman—the material and the operative cause of the world.
- Liberation is attained by deep meditation on Shiva and this leads to the knowledge that Shiva is identical with the individual self.

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8. Virasaivas

- A south Indian devotional cult, also called the Lingayat cult, this was a form of qualified non-dualism, Visishtadvaita.
- Although the Virasaiva main scriptural text, the ***Shunyasampadane***, does not mention the name Lingayat, it is probable that originally it was an epithet applied to Virasaivas by other cults, because of their concentration on the linga as the only true symbol of divinity.
- **Basava (1105-1167 CE)** was the founder, or more probably the systematiser, of the movement. At sixteen he left home and went to the pilgrimage town of Sangameshwara, where he worked to reform Saivism, to overcome caste distinctions and to fight the ban on the remarriage of widows. Later he became a minister of the usurper King **Bijjala** who reigned at Kalyani.

✓ While serving the king he converted a number of Jainas to his cult. But his unorthodox views caused tension between the king and his subjects and he left the king's service. After Basava's death in 1167 CE the members of his sect were persecuted but today the movement has many followers, mostly in Kamataka and AP.

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- A model of the linga is presented to each devotee at initiation for daily worship. It is worn in a container round the neck or held in the hand during worship.
- Basava taught that all men are temples, and hence they may worship Siva directly without the aid of priests, ritual sacrifices, fasts or pilgrimages. However, this cult later inaugurated their own priests called ***jangamas***, who are regarded as incarnations of Siva.
- The movement has no temples except those erected as memorials. Women have equality with men and may choose their husbands.
- Among the things forbidden to cult members are pride, dishonesty, meanness, animal sacrifices, eating meat and drinking intoxicants, astrology, child marriage, sexual licence, and cremation. The last is forbidden because at death the devotee goes immediately to Siva and is at all times, ensured of his protection. (The dead are buried in a sitting position facing north, unmarried people in a reclining position).

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Bhakti Saints of the Medieval Era

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❖ **Ramananda (1360–1470)** : Born at Prayag, he was originally a follower of Ramanuja. Later he founded his own sect and taught in Hindi at Banaras and Agra.

- A worshipper of Rama, he taught against caste and admitted disciples from all castes. His disciples included the following, showing his disregard for caste rules: (a) Kabir, a Muslim weaver; (b) Raidasa, a cobbler; (c) Sena, a barber; (d) Sadhana, a butcher; (e) Dhanna, a Jat peasant; (f) Narahari, a goldsmith; and (g) Pipa, a Rajput prince.
- After Ramananda the bhakti movement in north India was propagated by two schools of thought, namely the saguna school and the nirguna school. The saguna school believed that god had many forms and attributes akin to the human one.
- The nirguna school on the other hand believed in a god without any form or attributes.

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- **Kabir (1398–1518)** :Born near Banaras supposedly to a Brahmin widow, he was brought up by a childless Muslim weaver, Niru. Married to Loi, he had two children and led the normal life of a householder.
- Supposedly persecuted by Sikandar Lodhi, who was his contemporary, he died a natural death at Maghar in UP. His ***dohas and sakhi*** (poems), whose collection is found in the ***Bijak,*** were very popular among the common people and throw light on his teachings. He believed in pantheism, i.e. God is everywhere.
- He pleaded for Hindu-Muslim unity, and emphasised the unity and formlessness of god. Kabir denounced formal religious practices in both Hinduism and Islam.
- He did not suggest the abandonment of the life by a normal house holder for the sake of a saintly life. He believed that asceticism and book knowledge were not necessary for true knowledge and salvation.
- He sharply condemned caste and religious distinctions and preached brotherhood of man through his dohas (poems).

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❖ **Nanak (1469–1539)** and Sikhism Born at Talwandi (now Nankana in Pakistan), he travelled very widely in West Asia and Russia. He is also said to have met Babur. Like Kabir, he also preached a casteless, universal, ethical, anti-ritualistic, monothestic and highly spiritual religion.

- Nanak laid greater stress on the purity of character and conduct as the first condition in approaching god, and also the need of a guru for guidance. After his death, his followers called themselves 'Sikhs' and a new religious sect, Sikhism, was founded. Nanak was followed by nine Sikh gurus.
- ***Guru Angad***, the second guru, started the Gurumukhi script.
- ***Guru Amardas***, the third guru, began the institution of langar (common kitchen) to abolish the caste system.
- ***Guru Ramdas,*** the fourth guru, was given the site of Harmandir at Amritsar by Akbar.
- ***Guru Arjun***, the fifth guru, compiled the Adi Granth (later called the Granth Sahib) and also completed the construction of the Harmandir at Amritsar. His execution by Jahangir for political reasons led to the first phase of militancy among the Sikhs under their sixth guru, ***Guru Hargobind***, who was also imprisoned by Jahangir for ten years.
- While the period of ***Guru Harrai, the seventh guru***, was uneventful, ***Guru Harkishan, the eighth guru***, died of smallpox at the tender age of eight.
- ***Guru Tegh Bahadur***, the ninth guru, was executed by Aurangzeb and ***Guru Gobind Singh***, the 10th and last guru, established the Khalsa and organised the Sikhs into a military sect.

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- ❖ **Chaitanya (1436–1533)** Responsible for the popularity of Vaishnavism in Bengal through his kirtans, he spread the message that ***ragamarga*** or the path of spontaneous love was best for salvation. He believed in the ***bhedabheda***, i.e. dualistic non-dualism, Vedanta school and the ***Gaudiya Vaishnavism*** tradition within Hinduism.
- Chaitanya is sometimes referred to by the names ***Gauranga*** or ***Gaura*** due to his fair complexion, and **Nimai** due to his being born underneath a Neem tree.
- ❖ **Vidyapati (1352–1448)** : Maithili saint-poet who wrote thousands of love-ballads on Radha-Krishna ('Padavali'). He was also known by the sobriquet *Maithil Kavi Kokil* (the poet cuckoo of Maithili), was a Maithili and Sanskrit poet.

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- **Purandar Das (1480-1564)** : The foremost and the most prolific Vaishnav saint-composer in Karnataka. Believed to have laid the foundations of the modern phase of Karnataka music. He was a disciple of the Dvaita philosopher-saint Vyasatirtha, and a contemporary of yet another Haridasa, Kanakadasa.
- In honor of his significant contributions to Carnatic music, he is widely referred to as the ***Pitamaha*** (*lit*. "father" or "grandfather") of Carnatic music. He is respected as an *Avatara* (incarnation) of the great sage **Narada.**
- **Mirabai (1498 -1556)** : The Rathor princess and daughter-in-law of Rana Sanga of Mewar. The most well-known woman Bhakti saint of the Krishna cult of Vaishnavism.
- **Surdas (1483-1546)** : a blind poet of Agra. He sang the glory of Krishna in his 'Sursagar'. Disciple of Vallabhacharya of south India, he popularised the Krishna cult in UP by singing songs glorifying Krishna's childhood. He was the author of Sur Sagara, Sur Sarawali, etc.

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- **Shankara Deva** (1449-1568): The founder of the vaishnava devotional movement of Assam. He was saint-scholar, poet, playwright, social-religious reformer and a figure of importance in the cultural and religious history of Assam, India.
- He is widely credited with building on past cultural relics and devising new forms of music (**Borgeet**), theatrical performance (**Ankia Naat, Bhaona**), dance (**Sattriya**), literary language (**Brajavali**).
- Besides, he has left an extensive literary works of trans-created scriptures (Bhagavat of Sankardev), poetry and theological works written in Sanskrit, Assamese and Brajavali.
- The Bhagavatic religious movement he started, **Ekasarana Dharma** and also called Neo-Vaishnavite movement, influenced two medieval kingdoms---*Koch and the Ahom kingdoms—and* the assembly of devotees he initiated evolved into **Sattras** over time, which continue to be important socio-religious institutions in Assam and to a lesser extend in North Bengal.

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- **Tulsidas (1532-1623)** : the greatest saint poet of Rama Bhakti cult of Vaishnavism. The celebrated author of Ramcharitamanas, Kavitawali, and Gitawali. Tulsidas spent most of his life in the city of Varanasi. The Tulsi Ghat on the Ganges River in Varanasi is named after him. He founded the Sankatmochan Temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman in Varanasi.
- **Dadu Dayal** (1544-1603): Born in Ahmedabad to Muslim parents, he was brought up by Lodhi, a Hindu cotton-carder. He preached in Rajasthan, first at Sambhar and later at Naraini (near Jaipur) where he finally died.
- Though illiterate, his verses were collected by his disciples in a book, the ***Bani,*** in Hindi. His followers, Dadupanthis, expose their dead like the Parsis. He practised the teachings of Kabir and denounced caste distinctions.

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- **Thyagaraja (1767-1847):** a telugu who spent his life in Tamil Nadu the greatest saint-composer of Karnataka music. He adorned god in the form of Rama, the incarnation of vishnu and the hero of Valmiki's Ramayana.

- *Tyagaraja* and his contemporaries, *Shyama Shastri* and *Muthuswami Dikshitar*, were regarded as the ***Trinity of Carnatic music***. Tyagaraja composed thousands of devotional compositions, most in Telugu and in praise of Lord Rama, many of which remain popular today.
- Of special mention are five of his compositions called the ***Pancharatna Kritis*** (five gems), which are often sung in programs in his honour.

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Bhakti Saints Of Maharashtra Dharma

- **Jnaneshwara/Jnanadeva** (1275-1296) : He is also known as Dnyaneshwar or Saint Mauli. He is the fountain head of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra, founder of Marathi language and literature. He authored *Dnyaneshwari* (a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*) and *Amrutanubhav*. These are the oldest surviving literary works in the Marathi language, under the patronage of the Yadava dynasty of Devagiri, and these are considered to be milestones in Marathi literature.
- Dnyaneshwar's ideas reflect the non-dualistic *Advaita Vedanta philosophy* and an emphasis on Yoga and oneness of Vishnu and Shiva, but an ardent devotee of Lord Vitthala (a form of Lord Vishnu) of Pandharpur.
- His legacy inspired saint-poets such as Eknath and Tukaram, and he has been regarded as one of the founders of the **Varkari** (Vithoba-Krishna) Bhakti movement tradition of Hinduism in Maharashtra.
- Biographical details of Dnyaneshwar's life are preserved in the writings of his contemporary ***Namdev*** and his disciples ***Satyamalanath*** and ***Sachchidanand***.
- Dnyaneshwar's devotional compositions called Abhangas are believed to have been formulated during his pilgrimage to Pandharpur and other holy places when he got initiated into the Varkari tradition.

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- **Namadeva** (1270-1350) : a contemporary of Jnaneshwara. He was a tailor by caste and was opposed to all caste distinctions. The object of his devotion was Vithobha or Vitthal (identified with Vishnu) of Pandharpur. The cult of Vithoba or Vitthal known as Varkari sect was followed and propagated by Namadeva.
- Bhagat Namdev's writings were also recognized by the Gurus of Sikhism and are included in the holy book of Sikhism, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Namdev worshipped Vithoba, one of many forms of lord Vishnu but ***Ronald McGregor*** states that in the larger context of Rama, Namdev was not referring to the hero described in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, but to ***pantheistic Ultimate Being.***
- Namdev was influenced by Vaishnavism and became widely known in India for his devotional songs set to music (*bhajan-kirtans*). His philosophy contains both *nirguna* and *saguna* Brahman elements, with monistic themes. Namdev's legacy is remembered in modern times in the *Varkari* tradition, along with those of other *gurus*, with masses of people walking together in biannual pilgrimages to Pandharpur in south Maharashtra.

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- Namdev and Jñānēśvar used the Marathi language to convey their beliefs rather than using the traditional Sanskrit language that was essentially a buttress for the pre-eminence of the Brahmin priests. Namdev's style was to compose simply worded praise for Vithoba and to use a melodic device called *samkirtana*, both of which were accessible to common people.
- "He taught that all can be saved equally, without regard to caste, through devotion (*bhakti*) to Vithoba" and that he greatly influenced groups of people who were forbidden by the Brahmin elite from studying the Vedas, such as women and members of the Shudra and untouchable communities.
- The earliest anthological record of Namdev's works occurs in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scriptures compiled in 1604. It is evident that the *Guru Granth* record is an accurate rendition of what Namdev wrote: the oral tradition probably accounts significantly for the changes and additions that appear to have been made by that time.
- The numerous subsequently produced manuscripts also show variant texts and additions that are attributed to him. Of around 2500 abhangs that were credited to him and written in the Marathi language, perhaps only 600 - 700 are authentic. The surviving manuscripts are geographically dispersed and of uncertain provenance.

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Eknath

(1533 – 1599)

- **Eknath** : A great scholar saint from Maharashtra who wrote a commentary on the Ramayana called the Bhavartha Ramayana and another commentary on the 11th book of Bhagavata Purana.
- He was a prominent Marathi saint, scholar, a great devotee of Lord Krishna and a religious poet of the Varkari sampradaya. In the development of Marathi literature, Eknath is seen as a bridge between his predecessors—Dnyaneshwar and Namdev—and the later Tukaram and Ramdas.
- He wrote a variation of the *Bhagavata Purana* which is known as the *Eknathi Bhagavata*, and a variation of the *Ramayana* which is known as the *Bhavarth Ramayan*. Eknath wrote *Rukmini Swayamwar Hastamalak*, which was comprised 764 *owees* and based on a 14-shlok Sanskrit hymn with the same name by Shankaracharya.
- His other works were the *Shukashtak* (447 *owees*), the *Swatma-Sukha* (510 *owees*), the *Ananda-Lahari* (154 *owees*), the *Chiranjeewa-Pad* (42 *owees*), the *Geeta-Sar*, and the *Prahlad-Wijaya*. He introduced a new form of Marathi religious song called *Bharood*, writing 300 of them.

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Tukaram (1598-1650)

- **Sant Tukaram Maharaj** also referred to as **Santshreshta**, **Jagadguru**, **Tukoba** and **Tukobaraya**, was a 17th-century Hindu poet and sant of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra, India. He was part of the egalitarian, personalized Varkari devotionalism tradition. Sant Tukaram Maharaj is best known for his devotional poetry called Abhanga and community-oriented worship with spiritual songs known as kirtans. His poetry was devoted to Vitthala or Vithoba.
- According to RD Ranade, Tukaram's spiritual teacher was *Babaji Chaitanya*, who himself was fourth generation disciple of the 13th-century scholar *Jnanadeva*. In his work of *Abhangas*, Tukarama repeatedly refers to four other persons who had a primary influence on his spiritual development, namely the earlier Bhakti Sants *Namdev*, *Dnyaneshwar*, *Kabir* and *Eknath*.
- According to some scholars, Tukaram met Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Eleanor Zelliot states that Bhakti movement poets including Tukaram were influential in Shivaji's rise to power.
- Sant Tukaram composed Abhanga poetry, a Marathi genre of literature which is metrical (traditionally the *ovi* meter), simple, direct, and it fuses folk stories with deeper spiritual themes.
- Tukaram's work is known for informal verses of rapturous abandon in folksy style, composed in vernacular language, in contrast to his predecessors such as Dnyandeva or Namdev known for combining similar depth of thought with a grace of style.

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Ramdas (1608 – 1681)

- **Samarth Ramdas (c. 1608 - c. 1681),** also known as Sant (saint) Ramdas or Ramdas Swami or simply Ramdas was an Indian Hindu saint, philosopher, poet, writer and spiritual master. He was initially named as Narayan after birth. He was a devotee of the Hindu deities Rama and Hanuman and also a contemporary of the Maratha rulers Shivaji and Sambhaji.
- After leaving home Ramdas He traveled for around twelve years and witnessed the then existing social realities. He made observations on the effects of natural calamities such as floods and famines on human life. He also observed the atrocities that the then Muslim rulers committed on the common masses. He had these observations recorded in two of his literary works *Asmani Sultania* and *Parachakraniroopan.*
- As part of his mission to redeem spirituality among the masses and unite the distressed Hindu populations, Ramdas initiated the Samarth sect. He established several matha (monasteries) across the Indian subcontinent. He is claimed to have established somewhere between 700 and 1100 matha during his travels.
- Ramdas had extensive literature written during his lifetime. His prominent literary work is *Dasbodh*.

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Main Features :

1. Discarded ritual and sacrifices.
2. Emphasised purity of heart and mind, humanism and devotion
3. Monotheistic in nature
4. God is Saguna or Nirguna.
5. Knowledge was a constituent part.
6. An egalitarian movement
7. Best form of worship is singing Bhajans and realisation of God by personal effort. No need of priestly class.
8. Saints, preached in local languages.

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Thank You !

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