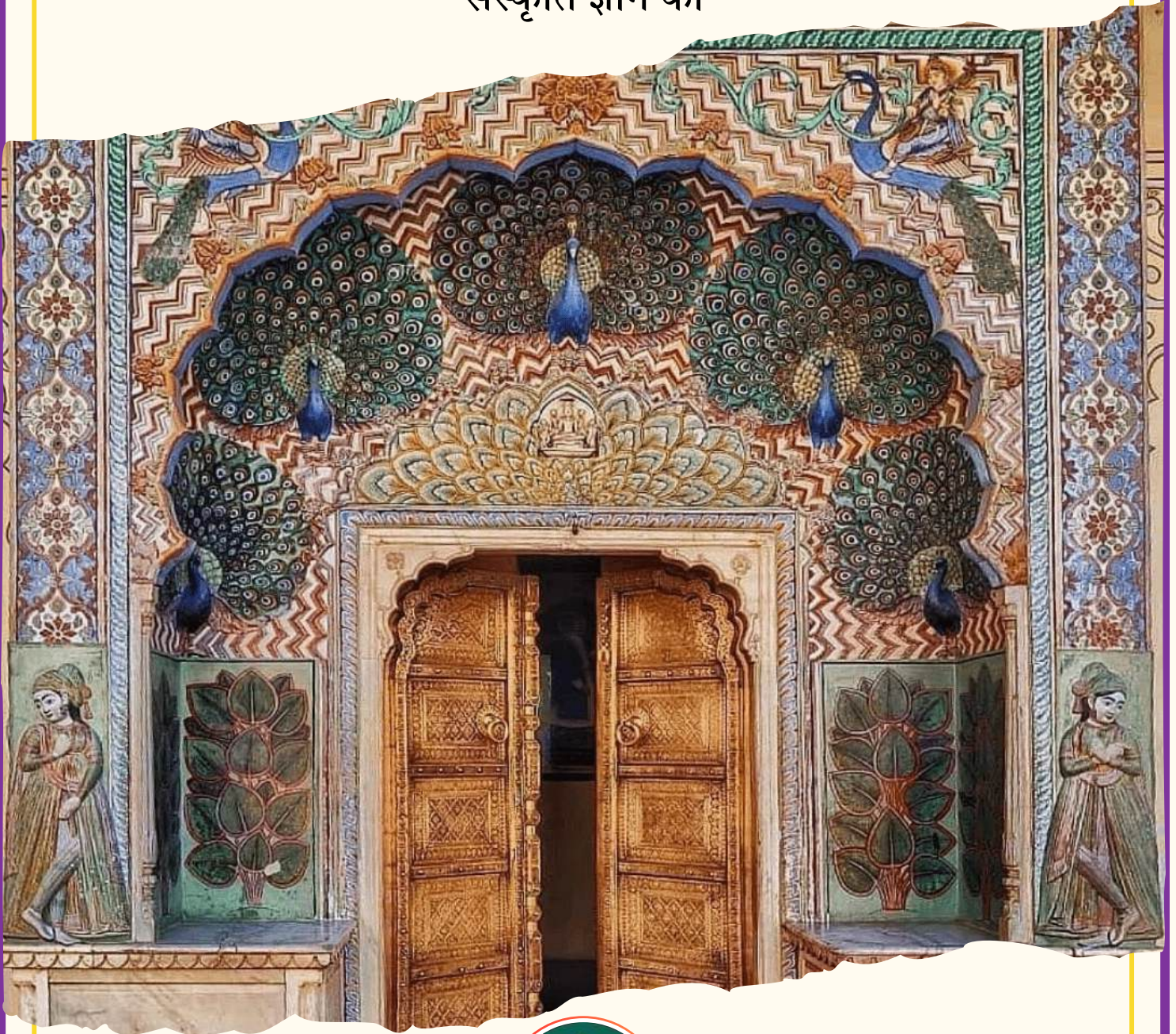


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DAKSHI

संस्कृति ज्ञान की



Disclosing the Ancient Knowledge Systems and Heritage of India





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported and contributed to this edition of our magazine dedicated to the Ancient Indian Knowledge System and Culture. Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the esteemed scholars, historians, and researchers whose expertise and thoughtful work have illuminated the rich intellectual traditions of India. Their commitment to truth and knowledge has greatly enriched these pages.

We bow in gratitude to the enlightened Rishis and the divine guidance of Ishwar, whose wisdom, spirituality, and cultural stewardship have shaped the very foundations of India's heritage across millennia.

We also thank our talented writers and contributors, whose careful research and articulate expression have brought together diverse ideas into a meaningful and accessible narrative.

A warm appreciation is reserved for our editorial and design teams. Their creativity, precision, and attention to detail have ensured that this magazine is not only informative but also visually engaging and cohesive.

We are grateful to the institutions and organizations that stood behind this initiative with their support and encouragement, helping us celebrate and preserve the valuable knowledge systems of our land.

Finally, to our readers: your curiosity, enthusiasm, and love for India's heritage are the true motivation behind our work. You inspire us to continue seeking, learning, and sharing the timeless wisdom of our ancestors.

Thank you for being a vital part of this journey. Together, may we continue to nurture and pass on the radiant legacy of ancient Indian knowledge to the generations that follow.



DAKSHI MOVEMENT

DAKSHI (The Disclosing Ancient Knowledge Systems and Heritage of India) is a movement that seeks to re-awaken the ancient waiver knowledge system of India. Through this movement, we strive to bring ancient knowledge to the modern world. This includes the study of ancient texts and practices, engaging in discussion and debate, conducting research, hosting lectures, participating in competitions and workshops, and more. By doing so, the movement hopes to make ancient knowledge more accessible to everyone and to bring it to the forefront of today's society.

Meaning of the word Dakshi is derived from the Sanskrit word "Daksh" which means Strength or Competent. So through Dakshi we would give strength to Ancient Knowledge in reviving itself.

Established on 19th of December, 2022 on the auspicious occasion of Mokshada Ekadashi, Margashirsha Maas, Vikram Samvat 2079 and Every year Mokshada Ekadashi will be celebrated as the anniversary of Dakshi.

First Meeting on 2nd of January, 2023 on the auspicious occasion of Shattila Ekadashi, Pausha Maas, Vikram Samvat 2079.



DAKSHI MOVEMENT

Motto of Dakshi is Culture of Knowledge or to say "संस्कृति ज्ञान की" ।

Every meeting of Dakshi starts with the Saraswati Vandana and ends with the National Song of Bharat i.e Vande Matram.

Accclamation or Jayghosh is "Jay Dakshi".

The Annual Event is organized on the Very first day of the Month of Chaitra of Hindu Calendar every year.



DAKSHI MOVEMENT

Vision

ॐ न हि जानेन
सदृशंपवित्रमिह विद्यत।।
इस संसार मेंज्ञान के समान
पवित्र (अन्य) कुछ भी
नहीं है।

Our Vision is very clear that we want to re-establish the Ancient Indian Culture of Knowledge through the Re-Discovery of Ancient Indian knowledge systems via research and development of the Scriptures. Our Vision is to make DAKSHI a platform where anyone can come to know about the true essence of culture and knowledge of traditions, rituals, practices with the scientific temperament.

Mission

The movement strives to bridge the gap between current and ancient wisdom for a better understanding of the human condition and the world in which we live. And its main aim is to connect cultural antiquity with modernity. We want to make ancient Indian knowledge more reliable or accessible for the present as well as future generations through this movement.

Objective

We aim to promote both analytical and critical thinking, as well as their application to our modern environment. As a result, society would better understand its past and be able to determine its future, according to the movement. Our objective is to promote or conserve culture through logic, that is if we follow something we should have the knowledge regarding the same and the Logics in favor of the thing which we follow or spread



Director's Note



Akshit Kumar Bhadauria is a M.A History student at University of Delhi. He is from Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. He is a Poet and the Author of the book "शुद्ध - एक दिव्य वर्ण" and "कांटे का वृक्ष". He is the Founder and Director of DAKSHI Movement.

Dear Readers,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to this special edition of our magazine, dedicated to celebrating the enduring legacy of India's ancient knowledge systems. For thousands of years, India has been a flourishing center of learning, cultivating profound ideas that continue to influence global thought even today.

In this issue, we take you through the diverse realms of traditional wisdom: Ayurveda that nurtures holistic well-being, Yoga that unites mind and spirit, Vedic sciences, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, literature, and much more. These disciplines are not merely relics of the past; they are vibrant streams of knowledge that remain deeply relevant to the modern world.

As we navigate these realms, we also ask an essential question: How do we honor our heritage while embracing innovation and the fast-evolving challenges of the 21st century? The harmony between age-old traditions and contemporary progress is a conversation that deserves our collective attention.

Our contributors have collaborated with scholars, historians, and practitioners to present meaningful perspectives on how India's intellectual and cultural traditions have endured and adapted. Through their work, we highlight the interconnectedness of knowledge, art, spirituality, and lived culture in shaping the Indian experience.

This edition is not just a showcase of history. It invites you to engage with the profound insights passed down through generations, to reflect on their relevance today, and to imagine the future they can help us build. It is a dialogue between what was, what is, and what can be.

We hope these explorations spark curiosity, encourage thoughtful reflection, and deepen your appreciation for the timeless wisdom that continues to define India's identity.

Happy reading, and may this journey be as enlightening as the knowledge it uncovers.

Akshit Kumar Bhadauria



Executive Council

Akshit Kumar Bhadauria is a graduate in History from Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi and currently pursuing Masters of Arts in History from University of Delhi itself. He hails from Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh and currently lives in Delhi. He was the College Ambassador to the Election Commission of India in 2024. He is an independent researcher and an oral Historian and has published many articles and Research Papers in several Journals. He is also the Author of the two Books named as " Shudra:- ek Divya Varna" and "Kaante ka Vriksh". He has written more than 150 Poems in Hindi and was felicitated by the Education Minister of India for his Writings. He is the Founder and Director of DAKSHI.



Kartik Yadav, hailing from Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, has completed his Bachelor's degree in History from Kirori Mal College. His involvement in DAKSHI brings him great enthusiasm as, on a daily basis, he gains insights into various aspects of the age-old culture and heritage. Kartik actively participates in exploring the scientific relevance of these cultural elements and their significance in the contemporary world. Presently, he is engaged as a researcher and serves as a video anchor for DAKSHI.

Niharika is currently a 3rd year student pursuing Zoology honors from Daulat Ram College. Hailing from Rajasthan she is currently serving as the president of DAKSHI DRC team. Her passion for poems and literature is complimented by her interest in debates and discussions especially surrounding the Indian Knowledge System.





Executive Council

Diya Singh, has completed her bachelor's in history from Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi. She is a voracious reader who also enjoys exploring new places, dancing, and writing. She is currently working as Magazine's Co-Editor in DAKSHI.



Rajesh Kumar, has completed his graduation in Political Science from Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College. He is from Delhi and holds the position of Unit Digital head of Dakshi Arsd along with the Co-head of Dakshi's Graphic Designing Team. He is currently serving as the Executive Advisor to Social Media in DAKSHI.

Kritika Rastogi, Completed her graduation in Commerce from ARSD College, University of Delhi. She is from Chandigarh and holds the position of President of DAKSHI's ARSD Unit in the past currently she is the Executive Advisor to Sāhitya Parishad of DAKSHI.





Executive Council

Harsh Tomar, is currently in 3rd Year and pursuing Political science Honours from Kirori mal College. He is from Delhi, He is holding extreme interests in History, Public administration, and Ancient Indian Philosophy Besides this, he keeps himself engaged in video and photo editing for professional and personal purposes. He authored several research papers. He is currently the Journal Council head of DAKSHI.



Mohit Sharma, is a 3rd year student at S.M.S. Govt. Model Science College, Gwalior. He is also a NCC cadet. He in past holds the position of the head of the Graphics and Video Editing Team of DAKSHI. He is currently the Chief Executive of DAKSHI.

Kashish Mishra, has completed her graduation in Physics from Maitreyi College. She also served as the President of the Maitreyi Unit. She is known for her hard work and dedication as the head of event report compilation, data arrangement, and attendance and volunteer reports. She is currently the Executive Advisor to DAKSHI College units.





DAKSHI Initiatives



Speaker Sessions

Organized more than 50 sessions on Indian knowledge systems conducted by renowned scholars from different Universities of Bharat.



Research Workshop

Organised Three-Day Research Workshops twice a year to enhance research capabilities, focusing on research paper writing for Indian Knowledge Systems.



Shilpashastra

A dedicated series on the Shilpashastrīye Parampara, researching Indian Iconography and ancient art. Released the DAKSHI Shilpashastra Book on Gyānparv'25.



Certificate Course

A six-month course on Indian knowledge systems, exploring various subjects of Bharatiye Gyan parampara with lectures from renowned scholars.



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Sahitya Parishad

Founded to explore wisdom in Indian Literature and create new Indic Perspectives. Organised a competition and compiled a book "Gathāprabhā".



Itihasa-Purana Parishad

DAKSHI Council for Historical Research. Organised Brahmi Script Workshop and Sanskrit Course to implement an Indic Perspective in historiography.



Van Mahotsav

Organised the "Ek ped Bharat Maa ke Naam" plantation drive, dedicating trees to the soldiers of the Indian Army.



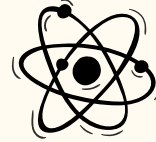
Rajmata Ahilyabai Holkar Memorial Lecture

Initiated to frame an Indic idea of Feminism, starting with a lecture on Rajmata Ahilyabai Holkar's 300th Birth Anniversary by Prof. Rama Sharma Ji.



Sanskar Series

Dedicated to the 16 Sanskars of Bharatiye Gyan Parampara, with videos made by the Director shared on social media to a great audience.



Dakshi Vigyan Saptaha

Indian Science Week to promote ancient Indian sciences and scientists, changing the narrative and presenting the scientific temperament of ancient society.



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ICCS Collaboration

In collaboration with the International Center for Cultural Studies, organized several international lectures on various Ancient Civilizations.



IKS Calendar

A Calendar based on the principles of Indian knowledge systems was published and released on the occasion of Navchetna'25. The calendar is showcasing the rich heritage of Bharat.



Newsletter "Vishwaguru"

A quarterly, topic-specific research journal publishing on Ancient Indian Wisdom, IKS Applications, Epigraphic Studies, and more.



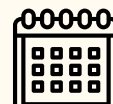
DU Literature Festival

Collaborated as a Society Partner with DU LIT FEST at SRCC, dedicating a flag to Knowledge Systems and organizing several speaker sessions.



Field Visits

Organized visits to Vrindavan, Mehrauli Park, Purana Quila, National Museum, and individual research trips to Ujjain, Orchha, and more.



Navchetna'25/82

Annual academic event and paper presentation on "City and Forest in Ancient Indian Art" at Daulat Ram College, featuring Chief Guest Shri Pundrik Goswami.



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BHAKTI MOVEMENT- SEARCHING UPON COMMONALITIES & BELIEFS OF NIRGUN & SAGUN BHAKTAS & THEIR RELEVANCE IN PRESENT-DAY WORLD

AKSHAY SHARMA

ATMA RAM SANATAN DHARMA COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI



ABSTRACT

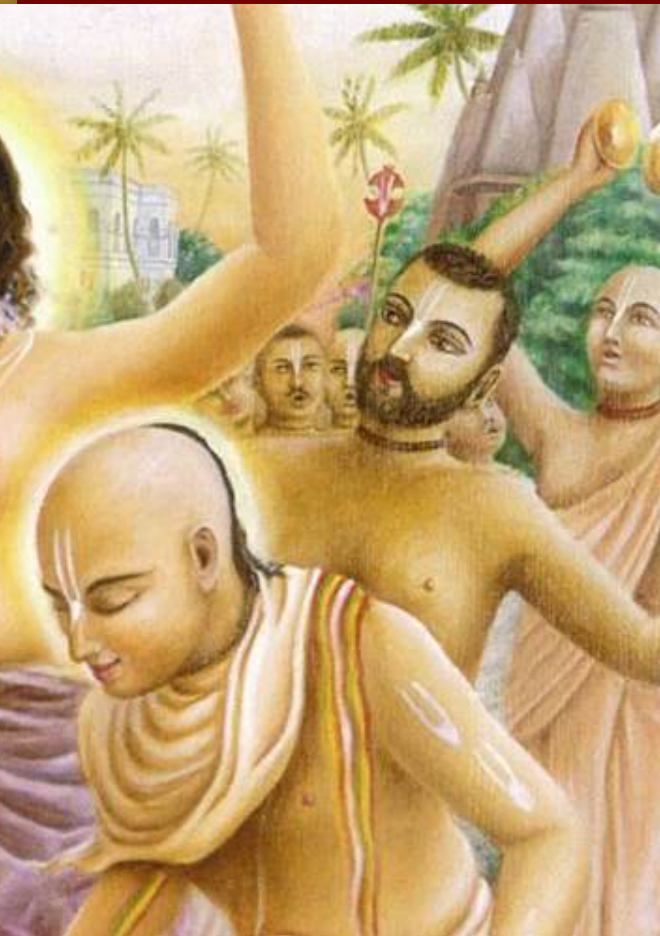
Bhakti is a way we tend to show our emotions and beliefs towards our chosen deities or almighty god. Since times immemorial, forms of bhakti have evolved. In Ancient India, around the 8th century, the Bhakti Movement rose up which set up sects of Bhaktas. Different religions and sectors of belief emerged dividing society into various schools of thoughts. In Hinduism, people got divided into sects of various deities but some chose to believe in a formless god.

This period and time impending saw various external religious forces entering India and changing the landscape of devotion. Through this paper, we are understanding the division of society on the basis of Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti and how this affected other religions that originated on the sacred land of India and external influences. We will also put Nirgun and Sagun Bhakti in the paradigm of the modern world with a more complex lifestyle that has evolved in human civilization.

Keywords: Bhakti, Bhakti Movement, Sagun Bhakti, Nirgun Bhakti, Hinduism, Indian Society, Devotion, Spiritual Diversity, Religious Sects, Formless God, Theism, Modern World, Cultural Transformation, Indian Philosophy, Comparative Religion

INTRODUCTION: EVOLUTION OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT

The period of 8-18th century in India saw the emergence of various divergences in the religious beliefs of the Indian population. Bhakti movement emerged as a movement portraying noble ways to portray devotion towards selected Hindu deities, initially in southern parts of India. Bhakti movement aimed to reduce the importance of Brahmins priests as intermediaries to initiate a bond with the mighty. They were against the Brahminical norms and unconventionally chose to devote themselves to God directly without any intermediary.



Bhakti was classified into Sagun and Nirgun. Sagun bhaktas believed that lord has a form and attributes. They believed in the devotion towards deities, idols, images, symbols and attributes associated with chosen deities. In contrast, Nirgun bhaktas believed that God has no form or shape. They are against idol worship. They are usually proponents of monolithic God.

Bhakti movement primarily has two types of Saint:

One, those who worshipped lord Shiva called Nayanars belong from the practice of Shaivism where the main deity worshipped is Shiva.

Second, those who worshipped lord Vishnu called Alvars belong from the practice of Vaishnavism where the main deity is Vishnu.

These bhakti saints moved with people from place to place singing hymns in the devotion of God. As they moved, more people kept on joining them. But how they were able to connect to the general masses? The main reason the bhakti movement flourished was the booming skepticisms towards Brahminical norms.

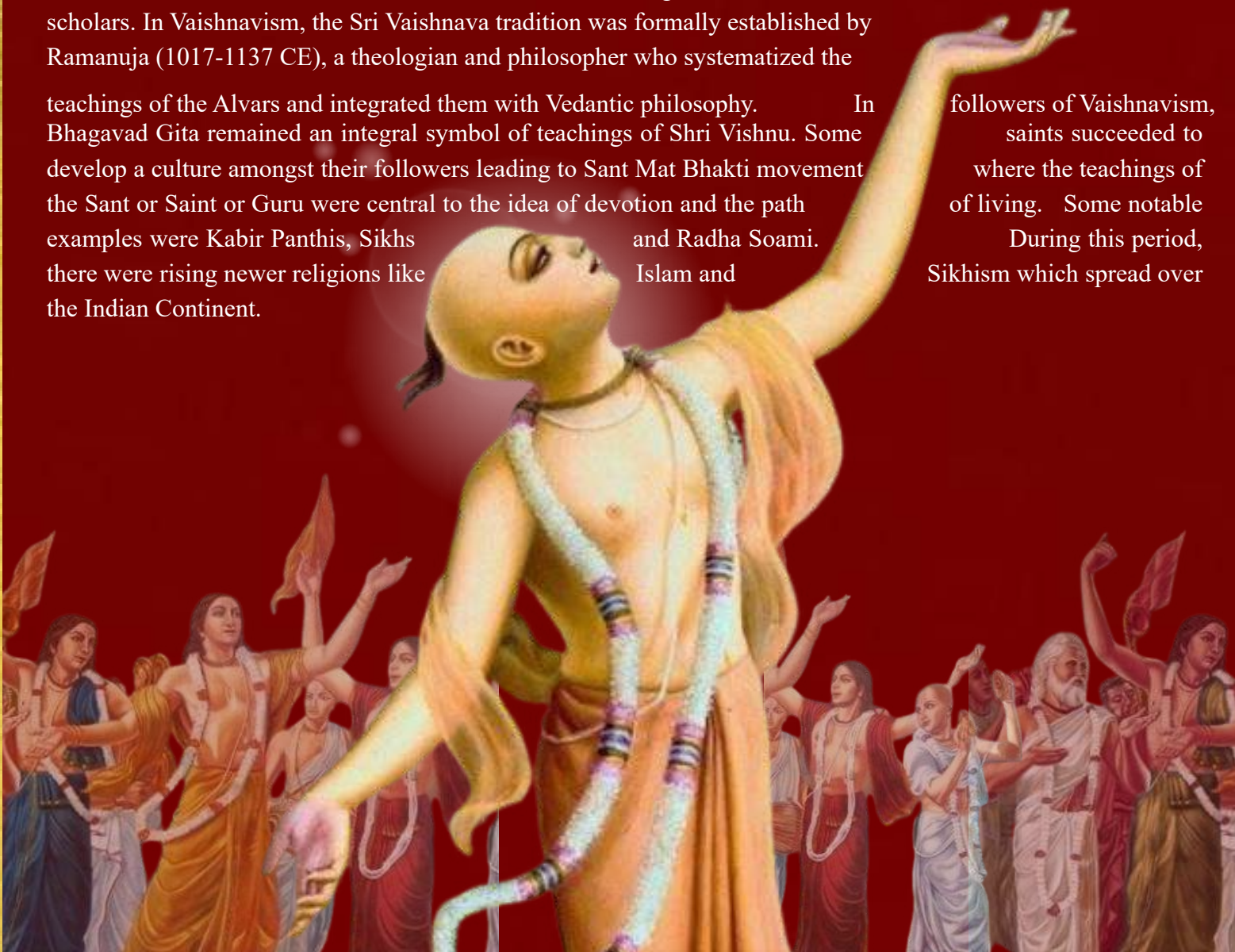
According to brahmins, society was divided into four varnas under the varna system- Brahman, Kshatriye, Vaishya and Shudra. Brahmins were at the top of the varna hierarchy and controlled the social arrangement. People born in lower classes like Shudra and Vaishya have restricted or no entry in temples and were not allowed to perform devotion towards their deities as the upper classes. There also existed people from Jatis which were not classified under any varna and were treated as outcast. Untouchability was prevalent in the society Women also has a relegated position in matters of worshipping in this patriarchal society where temples were like the milikiyat of the male priest who wanted to dominate the society. So, as the bhakti movement emerged which allowed people from all segments and strata of the society to join them in this movement then people especially from lower classes, outcasts and women joined it. These bhakti saints condemned the caste system and accepted followers from various social groups.

This social classification of the society led to massive support towards the movement in southern India. The period saw the emergence of chiefdoms of Chola, Cheras, Pandyas and Pallavas in southern India. These kingdoms were supporters of Jainism and Buddhism which were newer religions in divergence to Hinduism developed due to complexity that existed in Hinduism. Chiefs also were patrons of artisans and merchants. Over time, these saints also got support from the contemporary kings. Chola rulers provided donations to the saints in cash and kind-like land. The personal devotion of the king might have differed but why were they keen to be patrons of various traditions that existed? The main reason was to win the popular mandate and attention of the masses of their kingdoms. Through these social services, they tried to establish a divine claim through their association with religious traditions. Kings facilitated the construction of temples. As the saints travelled to places, shrines were constructed on the places they visited which later became sites of pilgrimage for the devotees. Chidambaram, Gangaikondacholapuram and Thanjavur are examples of such temples constructed by kingship in patronage to Alvar and Nayanar Saints. Vellalar Peasants were an important class who revered these saints so as to win the support of this class, kings also showed their respect to the saints. Moreover, kings introduced the signing of the Tamil hymns in the temples which were composed by the moving saints. Bronze statues of the god were also created. A Chola ruler namely Parantaka-I consecrated metal images of Tevaram which consisted of three Alvar saints- Appar, Samdharar and Sambandar in the temple.

Another Shaivik religious movement was led by Basavanna in the 12th century Karnataka whose followers were called Lingayats or Virashiva. They also made poetic compositions about Lord Shiva. During this period, the Saiva Siddhanta tradition spread in southern India which draws its authority from the 28 Saiva Agamas, the devotional works of several saints of Saivism, and the writings of several thinkers and scholars. In Vaishnavism, the Sri Vaishnava tradition was formally established by Ramanuja (1017-1137 CE), a theologian and philosopher who systematized the

teachings of the Alvars and integrated them with Vedantic philosophy. In Bhagavad Gita remained an integral symbol of teachings of Shri Vishnu. Some develop a culture amongst their followers leading to Sant Mat Bhakti movement the Sant or Saint or Guru were central to the idea of devotion and the path examples were Kabir Panthis, Sikhs and Radha Soami. there were rising newer religions like Islam and the Indian Continent.

followers of Vaishnavism, saints succeeded to where the teachings of of living. Some notable During this period, Sikhism which spread over



LITERATURE REVIEW

Many published literature tried to examine Bhakti movements and related saints through different aspects of studying history. (Pande R.,2000) A study on historiographical critique of the Bhakti Movements mentions how different schools of thought formed their view on the Bhakti movement. Beginning in the 13th century and continuing for more than four centuries, the Bhakti Movement was a religious and social revolution that aimed to subvert hierarchical hierarchies through accessible spirituality and devotion, especially among underprivileged populations. While scholars of religious provenance highlighted its roots in both ancient Islam and Hinduism, early colonial Orientalists positioned it within reformist traditions. Marxist historians examined it as a reaction to socioeconomic shifts in medieval India, while reformist and protest readings saw it as a critique of orthodoxy. Rekha Pande draws attention to how much historiography is gender-biased and north-centric, frequently ignoring the achievements of women as the movement did not aim to change the social relationship within the family. While post-colonial and feminist academics like Romila Thapar and Vidya Dehejia highlighted regional variety and female saints like Andal, early South Indian histories depended on hagiographies that portrayed saints as heavenly. Philosophical interpretations, like Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita, connected Bhakti to theological democratization. Subaltern viewpoints, comparisons with Sufism, and critiques of protest literature, including Chokhamela's writings, are all incorporated into contemporary study. In order to adequately represent Bhakti's regional diversity and challenged historical construction, recent critiques, most notably by Hawley, challenge the notion of a single "movement" and suggest a "network" model.

(Shafiulla K.,2019) Another research on the cultural aspect of the movement tells that the region's culture is still shaped by the enduring cultural legacy of the North Indian Bhakti Movement, which is based on tolerance, diversity, and the quest for spiritual fulfillment. It took intellectual inspiration from South Indian schools including Madhva's Dvaita, Nimbarka's

(Dvaita-Advaita, and Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita, and it promoted rich interreligious discourse through exchanges with Islamic and Sufi traditions. The two main kinds of Bhakti were Saguna Bhakti, which practiced god worship and was less critical of caste, and Nirguna Bhakti, which disregarded form, condemned caste systems, and promoted social equality. Bhakti also significantly improved vernacular writing by substituting regional tongues like Awadhi, Kannada, Brij, and Marathi for elite languages like Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. This enhanced both literary culture and popular religious expression. Bhakti was by no means a monolithic movement; rather, it showed considerable regional variability.



(Dinesha V.,2025) More recently, a scholar threw light on influences of the movement on other religions like Christianity. Between the seventh and tenth centuries, reformers like the Alvars, Nayanars, Ramanuja, Vallabha, Basavanna, Allama Prabhu, and Akka Mahadevi spearheaded the Bhakti Movement in South India. Later, under the influence of Kabir, Guru Nanak, Mirabai, Surdas, and Tulsidas, the movement moved northward. It was revived as a philosophical and ideological force by the eleventh century under the leadership of Ramanuja. The movement's emphasis on divine benevolence, selflessness, and personal emotional devotion resonates closely with Christian devotional traditions in India, fostering a spiritual connection between Christian communities and their ancestral Hindu

heritage. This interreligious affinity has shaped daily religious practices and influenced socio-economic life. Beyond its spiritual dimensions, Bhakti significantly impacted India's socio-cultural and political spheres, promoting inclusivity and inspiring transformative devotional practices that transcended religious boundaries and shaped community life across the subcontinent.

METHODOLOGY

This paper examines the similarities in the various divisions of the Bhakti movement and their links. We will look into beliefs and paths of various saints and drew on commonalities in the way of their devotion. We analyse the impact of Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti on Hinduism and other religions which spread throughout the country. We primarily used the secondary data to put forward our point through an approach to analyse historical writing and literature from ancient Indian texts of the subcontinent. We are also analysing the understanding and relevance of Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti in contemporary human civilisation through gathering primary data using Google forms. Through this we throw light on what path of worship do people follow in the current world and what are their practices and beliefs.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the Vaishnava Bhakti tradition of South India, the Ālvārs (Tamil poet-saints) were devoted to Vishnu/Narayana in deeply emotional and poetic ways. Among the 12 recognized Ālvārs, only one was a woman—Āṇḍāl. However, we can also consider other female Vaishnava bhaktas, such as those from the later Sri Vaishnava tradition.

Āṇḍāl and Meera Bai, two iconic women saints of the Bhakti movement, transformed devotion into a deeply personal and revolutionary act. Both envisioned God as their divine husband, reimagining marriage not as a social contract but as a spiritual union rooted in love and surrender.

Their bhakti was marked by emotional intensity (prapatti)—a wholehearted surrender to the beloved deity, prioritizing inner longing over external rituals. In doing so, they boldly rejected social expectations: Meera, as a royal widow, refused courtly norms and Āṇḍāl bypassed the idea of human marriage altogether. Both worshipped Sagun forms of God, Meera found Krishna in every heartbeat, and Āṇḍāl adored Ranganatha as her beloved. Their devotion flowed through songs, hymns, and poetry, where the divine was not distant but intimately present. Through their love and rebellion, these women saints also transcended gender roles, asserting equal if not greater spiritual authority than many of their male counterparts.

Krishna-bhakti saints demonstrated their devotion to the Lord in a variety of ways across India's many areas and ages, including as child Krishna (Baal

Gopal), young Vrindavan's lover (Shyamasundara, Radha-Krishna), cosmic guardian (Giridhar Gopal, Govardhan Nathji), and empathetic companion (Vithoba). From Vallabhacharya's Pushtimarg and Andal's Tiruppavai (Tamil Alvar poetry) to Surdas's Sursagar, Meera Bai's padas, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's ecstatic kirtans, the emotions varied

d from Madhurya rasa (romantic devotion) to Vatsalya (parental love) and Sakhya (friendship). The Bhagavad Gita (9.22: “To those who are ever devoted... I carry what they lack”), the Bhagavata Purana (Book 10’s Rasa Lila), and the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, which influenced emotional devotion across sects, were referenced in the philosophical underpinnings.

The absolute, personal, and approachable Divine, Krishna, is the ultimate commonality despite variations in form, ceremony, and language. He reciprocates love in every way that is presented, mirroring the Bhagavata Purana (11.14.15), which states, "I am attained only by unfaltering devotion." Saints from Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Bengal were united by their mutual opposition to orthodoxy, which revealed Bhakti as a common spiritual stream rooted in eternal biblical values rather than a homogenous movement.

The three women Nayanars—Karaikkal Ammaiyar, Mangayarkarasiyar and Isaiganiyar, embody diverse archetypes of feminine devotion within the Sagun Bhakti tradition to Shiva, each carving a unique spiritual path. Karaikkal Ammaiyar is remembered for her extreme renunciation, even shedding her physical beauty to serve Shiva as a disembodied spirit, symbolizing mystical, otherworldly devotion.

She prayed for deathless devotion blissful and she
Prayed again: “I seek birthlessness; should I be
Born again, then let me never, never forget You;
Also let me pray for the boon to hymn in delight, O
Holy One, near beneath Your feet when You dance.”

*~An English translation of an excerpt by
Karaikkal Ammaiyar from Periya Purnam*

In contrast, Sundaraththar or Sundervalli or simply regarded as Shiva devotee found divinity through the everyday roles of wife and homemaker, expressing her faith through domestic dharma and acts of loving service. Expressed that serving God’s devotees is equal to worshipping Shiva himself.

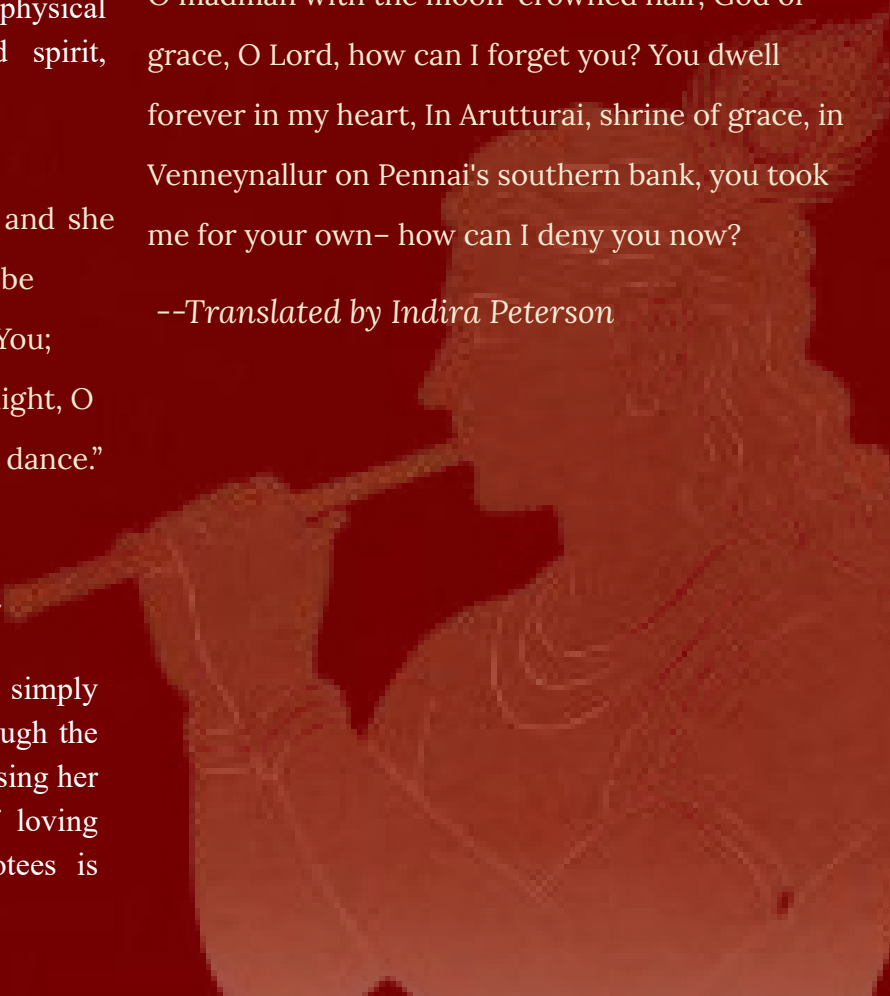
Not much information is available about all such women part of the Alvar sect and this reference could be formed in the oral traditions. Similarly, Mangayarkarasiyar embodied all the qualities of an ideal wife who with her patience, determination, love and above all great devotion to the glorious feet of the Lord opened the eyes of her husband.

Isaiganiyar, the mother of the saint Sundarar, represents a third path—where motherhood itself becomes a sacred offering, raising a child devoted to Shiva as her own form of bhakti. The great mother, Isaiganiyar, lived in the town of Tirunavalur, in the kingdom of Tirumunaipadi. There is an old adage saying, "As the thread, so the saree. As the mother, so the child". This devotee led a sincere life with Sadaiyar to give birth to the renowned devotee Sundara Murti Nayanar, who always took pride in saying he was the servitor of the servitors of Lord Shiva.

Sundarar began his first poem (Tevaram VII.1.1) by addressing Shiva as “Pittaa pirai chudi” meaning O mad man...

O madman with the moon-crowned hair, God of
grace, O Lord, how can I forget you? You dwell
forever in my heart, In Arutturai, shrine of grace, in
Venneyvallur on Pennai's southern bank, you took
me for your own— how can I deny you now?

--Translated by Indira Peterson



Though their lifestyles and expressions of faith varied, what unites them is their unwavering love for Shiva, their willingness to sacrifice worldly attachments, and a shared rejection of empty ritual in favour of emotional, inner purity. Through their lives, they expanded the boundaries of devotion, showing that bhakti could be lived through mysticism, duty, or motherhood alike. Mangayarkarasiyar, Isaiganiyar and Sundaraththar both chose a path of household devotion through their societal roles and obligations to cast their worship of the lord. They didn't renounce the world but believed that this world is the place of God.

Kabir Das and Guru Nanak emphasised on a path of bhakti of a formless god. They were Nirgun spiritual teachers. They were against Brahmanical norms. Kabir was in favour of iconoclasm, a practice where idol worship should not be done. They both believed in one god, i.e. monotheism and the path they suggested primarily focused on naam jaap or continuous recitation of the name of God. When Sufism came in India especially the Chishti Silsila, they also had similar beliefs of Nirgun God i.e. Allah but they were against materialism in Islam and perceived the Quran on their own interpretations.

They too were of the belief of oneness of God where these spiritual teachers that might be Kabir, Guru Nanak or Shaikh of Kanqah were all just teachers or mediums to connect to God whose followers were expected to follow their paths and teachings.

It might be Sagun bhaktas like Alvars and Nayanar or Nirgun teachers like Guru Nanak or Kabir, Spiritual hymns and songs remained an integral part of their journey to spread religious ideas amongst the general masses. Many places these saints visited or stayed remained in the textual stories and later shrines were developed there. These saints that rose during the Bhakti movement were against brahmanical ideas of devotion and entrenched caste-hierarchies. They welcomed people from all castes and genders. Devotion was seen as a path of liberation.

5.1. THE SAGUNIZATION OF NIRGUN TRADITIONS & CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES

While Nirgun Bhakti focuses on an abstract and formless divine, modern practices in traditions like Sikhism and Sufism show a shift toward Sagun-like expressions of devotion. Sikhism, which is based on the Nirgun idea of Waheguru, now includes ceremonies around the Guru Granth Sahib and visual respect for the Gurus. Similarly, Sufism, rooted in Islamic belief and mysticism, has developed popular practices centred on shrines (dargahs), honouring saints, and emotional musical forms like qawwali. This blend shows a human need for clear expressions of the intangible, mixing philosophical ideas with forms of devotion.

In the contemporary world, people are either devotees or atheists. But under the umbrella of devotion, there are many bifurcations too. Hinduism has both Nirgun and Sagun Bhaktas.



In Sikhism, guru Nanak never wanted to establish a separate religion but later the followers established Sikhism- as a religion separate from Hinduism. It was joined by people from other religions and various social groups. Those people who came in Sikhism, brought their thoughts and ideals from past experiences. Sikhs, today, worship both Hindu and Sikh festivals like Diwali, Holi, etc. Guru Nanak

proposed a path of Nirgun bhakti of Rabb/Waheguru who is formless, abstract and omnipresent through naam jap and kirtan. Many Sikhs on Mahanavmi worship the divine goddess and their nice avatars which is a Sagun practice. Guru Nanak taught about monotheistic and one good. Furthermore, people started to worship the idols and images of sants or founders like the ten Gurus of Sikhism and related people who stood against cruelties of Mughals in the early stages of Sikhism. Religious texts such as Guru Granth Sahib which

are like symbols of the religion are also revered. The religion started with the idea of Nirgun bhakti developed into a combination of Nirgun and Sagun practices due to its followers.

Tawhid, the idea that God—Allah—is wholly formless and incomparable to humans, is central to Islamic religion. This is in line with the concept of Nirgun Bhakti, which holds that the divine has no form, attributes, or boundaries. Sufi traditions, however, offer a stunning fusion of profound thought and sincere devotion. In addition to writing about laws and religion, poets such as Rumi, Bulleh Shah, and Hafiz put their hearts into their poetry, expressing a desire to immerse themselves in God's boundless love. They spoke of a strong and intimate connection that was like merging with the holy.

However, people's experiences and expressions of this vision frequently take shape, despite the fact that it is metaphysically formless. People can be seen praying, tying threads, lighting candles, and presenting flowers to the tombs of Sufi saints when you visit any dargah. These behaviors resemble the Sagun Bhakti of Hinduism, where God is revered in a tangible, approachable form.



Along with Qawwali, which is deep, potent music that not only speaks of God but also helps you experience God, people view these saints as more than simply mentors; they are bridges to the divine. Sufi poets and musicians convey heavenly love as though speaking to a beloved, much like Meera Bai did when she sang to Krishna. Therefore, although while Sufi theory is fundamentally Nirgun, the way individuals live and celebrate that love.

In Buddhism, Gautam Buddha stressed upon enlightenment or nibhana to cross the river of

materialistic world and urged his followers to be lamp unto themselves. His teachings were only recorded into texts after his death or mahaparinibhana. The older form of Buddhism was considered Theravada or Hinayana Buddhism or lesser vehicle. These followers emphasised on liberation through asceticism, self-disciple and meditation in a life monk or nun. Buddha was believed to be a teacher and his suggested path was religiously followed in a Nirgun manner.

However, over time Mahayana or Greater vehicle Buddhism developed where Buddha was seen as a God and the concept of Bodhisattva developed who were enlightened men seen as deities. Worship of Buddha, Bodhisattva or avatar of Buddha, Female nuns as Goddesses, etc. also started.

In Hinduism, Buddha was perceived to be the Avatar of Shri Vishnu which associated Buddha with Viashnavites. These days Buddhism has evolved more Sagun practices with Buddhist idols worshipped at homes, and monks believing in not a distant sacred but materialistically indulged life. The notion of monastery and ascetic life has become less prevalent amongst the followers.

In the present era, Guru Bhakti is being explored enough by people. Different spiritual speakers and self-proclaimed God-man and even God-woman have created a newer movement to connect with God, similar to the creation of sects at the time of Bhakti movement where initially those who were spiritual teachers later became revered. People see them as messengers and servants of God but sometimes a form of God as well.

Even when the ideas of a spiritual teacher focus on Nirgun Bhakti, often it has been seen that later in time, the Guru himself is being revered as God-like creating a Sagun Sense. Yet there are many practices of worship taken into propagation of religion where a direct link is established between Devotee and the deity in the contemporary world as well.

5.2. SURVEY ANALYSIS

Through the survey a set of questions were asked to the general public assumed as respondents. The survey was conducted online to facilitate easy access and paper saving. There were more than 70 respondents irrespective of caste, race, religion, age, belief, etc. Most respondents when asked “Do you believe in the existence of God- the Supreme and Almighty?” responded in affirmative (90% approximately). To understand the existence and importance of Nirgun and Sagun Bhakti, it was asked “If God exists, what form of God do you worship?” to which there were mixed reactions, however, most respondents confirmed that they believe in both-Nirgun and Sagun form of God.



Now, to get a better view about contemporary practices used in propagation of the belief in the society, we tried to investigate how people practice spirituality at personal levels in their day-to-day lives. The majority preferred idol worship and worshipping formless supreme beings, reconfirming that more people are inclined now to a mix of both Sagun and Nirgun practices of Bhakti or devotion. The question allowed selecting multiple choices among idol worship, formless worship, image worship, Guru Bhakti, Nature worship and rituals or Karam Kand. The least preferred was the Guru Bhakti. Further, an attempt was made to throw light on the importance of sacred places in the lifestyle of humans. Most consider that we can connect with God at any time and at any place while others believe that God is omnipresent and could be found in self. Less people preferred sacred places as the right medium to connect with the almighty. However, in current times too in practice religious centres are major tourist sites and an integral element in the economic sphere too. Moreover, it was asked if respondents think spirituality increases our morale and material benefit while also leads to personal growth and self-awareness. A high number of respondents replied in affirmative (83% approximately) throwing light on how religion has been practiced through histories for spiritual, moral and material benefits that are associated with it in the beliefs of the general masses. In conclusion, most responses assured a belief in the philosophy of Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti in the contemporary world.

At last, a subjective question was asked about what bhakti means to the respondents or their stand on Nirgun or Sagun Bhakti to which there were varied answers where some believed Bhakti is a profound spiritual experience characterized by deep devotion, emotional connection, and inner peace while



other one said that Bhakti fosters a sense of spiritual growth, self-realization, and bliss. Many different understandings, beliefs and paths were discussed in responses aligning with the idea of love towards God.

CONCLUSIONS

Through this paper, we examined the system of belief that formed centuries ago and still persist in the core practices of spirituality in India. While Sagun Bhaktas personalized God in the form of Krishna, Rama, or Shiva, and Nirgun Bhaktas spoke of an attribute-less, infinite presence, they were united in practice by their emphasis on devotion from the heart, egalitarian ethics, poetic expression, and inner purity. For them, true worship was less about form and more about feeling which has a longing to connect with the divine beyond boundaries of caste, creed, or theology. Saints became channels to create a ripple in minds of people to connect in a particular way emphasised by them. People diversified their thoughts of how they perceive and worship God. We found out that Bhakti and devotion is still an integral part of Indian society through the survey though it might be taken into consideration that the sample size was small (70 approximately) and scope of responses over a question was restricted to given choices. The survey may include biases of respondents. The aspect of how deep impact has been created by the movement on the contemporary world may be considered in the future studies. The smaller sects and divisions of Bhakti saints may also be reflected upon in further research. In conclusion, Bhakti movement is a diverse walk of people from different stratas of society choosing different long paths which ultimately end in the lap of the God.

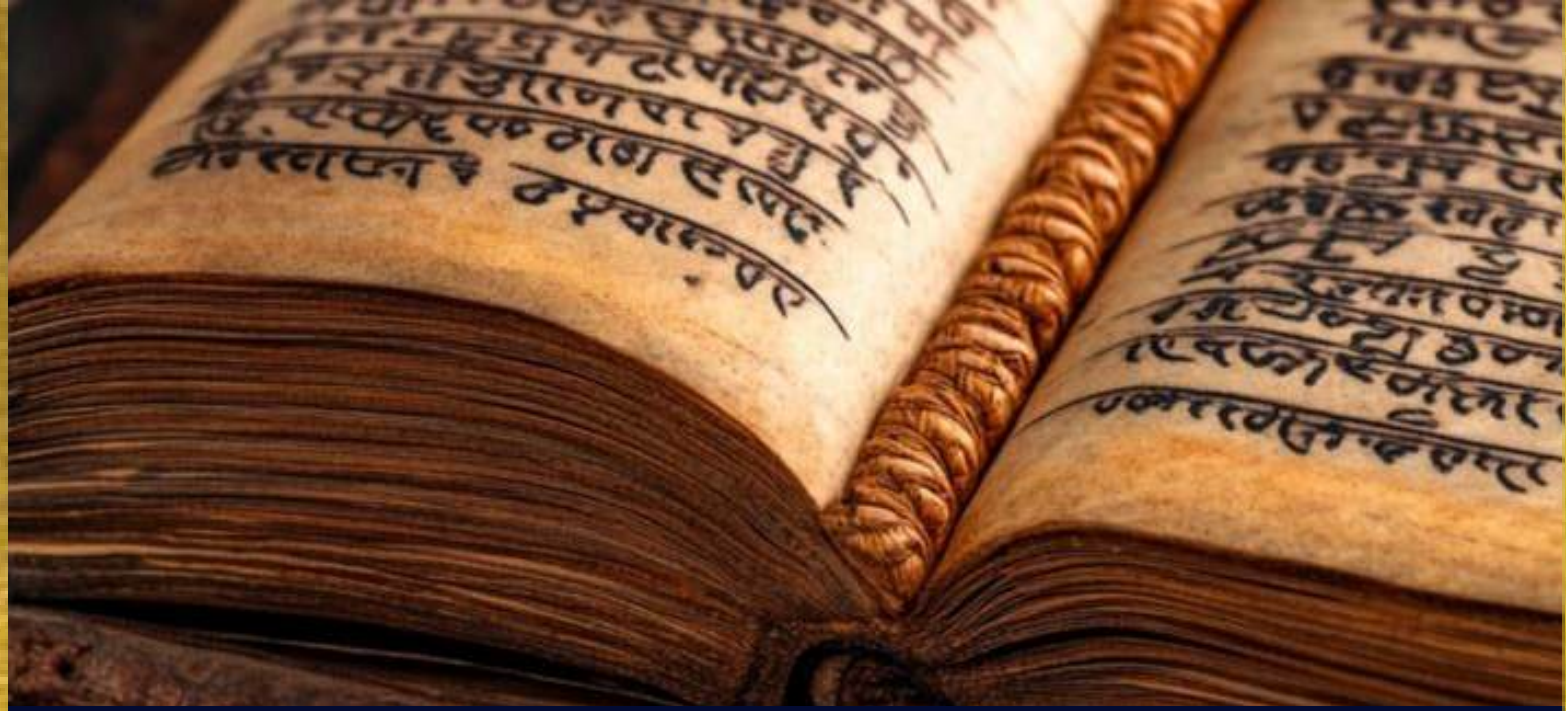
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उपनिषद् : भारतीय संस्कृति और मानवीय मूल्यों की खोज में ।

विपाशू गौतम

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सारांश

उपनिषद् भारतीय संस्कृति और मानवीय मूल्यों की खोज के लिए एक ज्ञान के भंडार की तरह कार्य करते हैं । उपनिषद् का दर्शन केवल भारत के लिए ही नहीं परंतु पूरी मानव सभ्यता में ही सबसे पुराने दर्शनों में से हैं । परंतु कालचक्र के आगे चलने के साथ ही उपनिषदों को केवल अध्यात्मिक उपदेश देने वाली किताब समझ लिया गया , इसको आम जन के लिए नहीं परंतु केवल पढ़े लिखे बुद्धिजीवियों और सन्यास लेने वाले साधुओं के लिए है यह कह कर उपनिषदों के महत्व को बहुत ही सीमित कर दिया गया । हमारे शोध में सभी मुख्य उपनिषदों के एक एक श्लोक का अध्ययन किया गया और इन उपनिषदों में निहित संस्कृति का अन्वेषण किया गया । तथा पाया की उपनिषद् केवल अध्यात्मिक ग्रंथ न होकर सभी व्यक्तियों के लिए एक मार्गदर्शिका के रूप में कार्य कर सकता है और आज जो हमें भारतीय संस्कृति दिखाई देती है उसकी जड़ उपनिषदों में ही है। उपनिषद् हमें आध्यात्मिक ज्ञान के अलावा हमारे सामाजिक आचरण , शिक्षा , दान , धर्म आदि विषयों पर भी उपदेश देते हैं । चूंकि उपनिषद् भारतीय संस्कृति का ही मूल तत्व है इसलिए इसके प्रति उचित दृष्टिकोण की अति आवश्यकता है , नहीं तो उपनिषदों के ज्ञान को हमेशा के लिए

नकार दिया जाएगा और भारतीय संस्कृति का मूल स्रोत नष्ट हो जाएगा । हमारा यह शोध उसी दृष्टिकोण को उपनिषद् के श्लोकों द्वारा प्रमाणित करता है ।

मुख्य शब्द: उपनिषद्, भारतीय संस्कृति, मानवीय मूल्य, आध्यात्मिक ज्ञान, दर्शन, सामाजिक आचरण, शिक्षा, दान, धर्म, सांस्कृतिक मूल तत्व, जीवन मार्गदर्शिका, सांस्कृतिक दृष्टिकोण, आध्यात्मिक परंपरा, ज्ञान का भंडार, सांस्कृतिक अन्वेषण



परिचय

उपनिषद् वैदिक साहित्य का एक महत्वपूर्ण अंग होने के साथ ही पूरे विश्व में अपने गहरे तात्विक एवम् अध्यात्मिक ज्ञान के लिए विख्यात है। अपने श्लोकों में अत्यंत कठिन और गूढ़ ज्ञान को तथा कठिन से कठिन प्रश्न को सरल भाषा में स्पष्टता से समझाने की क्षमता के कारण आज तक भारत उपनिषदों के ज्ञान का मूल भाव अपने साथ संजोए हुए है। “सत्यमेव जयते”, “तत् त्वं असी” से लेकर “अहं ब्रह्मास्मि” जैसे गहन अर्थ और प्रबुद्ध करने वाले श्लोक इन अनंत ज्ञान से परिपूर्ण उपनिषदों शोभा की एक झलक मात्र ही हैं।

उपनिषदों को वेदों का ही एक उपखंड माना गया है, वेदों के चार मुख्य खंड हैं – संहिता, ब्राह्मण, आरण्यक तथा उपनिषद्। वेदों के अंत में मिलने वाले ज्ञान के कारण उपनिषदों को वेदांत की संज्ञा भी दी गई है।

वैसे तो उपनिषदों की संख्या १०८ मानी जाती है परंतु मुख्य उपनिषद् ११ या १३ माने जाते हैं तथा सर्वपल्ली राधाकृष्णन एवं स्वामी दयानंद के अनुसार १० मुख्य उपनिषद् हैं। हम अपनी शोध पत्रिका में गीताप्रेस गोरखपुर द्वारा अनुवादित ११ मुख्य उपनिषदों को ही शोध का आधार मानेंगे।

प्राचीन भारत से लेकर आज तक अनेकों महान दार्शनिकों ने उपनिषदों का अध्ययन किया, आदिगुरु शंकराचार्य जी का उपनिषदों पर किया गया टीका उपनिषदों के अध्ययन का एक महत्वपूर्ण अंग है परंतु उनके इन उपनिषदों पर किए गए टीका में केवल श्लोकों के अध्यात्मिक अर्थ को उजागर किया गया जान पड़ता है, इसी प्रकार श्री सर्वपल्ली राधाकृष्णन के उपनिषद् अध्ययन पर आधारित पुस्तक “दी प्रिंसिपल उपनिषद्स” में उपनिषदों की संख्या, काल, रचना पर चर्चा तो की परंतु उपनिषदों के अंदर निहित श्लोकों के अनुवाद में वे भी केवल अध्यात्मिक अर्थ ही निकालते दिखाइए दिए। इसके साथ ही श्री एकनाथ ईश्वरन, स्वामी शिवानंद, श्री अरबिंदो के अध्ययनहमें उपनिषदों के अंदर निहित गूढ़ रहस्य जैसे ब्रह्म का स्वभाव, तत्त्व ज्ञान, श्रुष्टि रचना, जड़ – चेतन पर चर्चा करते दिखाई देते हैं। स्वामी विवेकानंद के विचार इन सबसे थोड़े से भिन्न दिखाई पड़ते हैं क्योंकि उन्होंने उपनिषदिक संदेश को सरल भाषा में करके आम जन के अंदर पहुंचाने का प्रयास किया, उन्होंने उपनिषदों को एक अध्यात्मिक ग्रंथ से ऊपर उठा कर एक व्यावहारिक रूप प्रदान कर विश्व के सामने लाने का प्रयास किया। जो की इस दिशा में पहला प्रयास था।

इन सब अध्ययन में हम एक वस्तु का अभाव देखते हैं – उपनिषदों के अंदर की संस्कृति की खोज करना तथा उसको आज की भारतीय संस्कृति से जोड़कर देखना की क्या उपनिषद् ही भारतीय संस्कृति का मूल तत्व है, भारतीय संस्कृति के साथ ही उपनिषद् के श्लोकों में मानवीय मूल्य संबंधित संदेश हम खोज पाएं तथा एक आम भारतीय जो नैतिक मूल्य लेकर उनमें संबंध स्थापित करके देखना की क्या उपनिषदों के नैतिक एवं मानवीय मूल्य ही एक आम भारतीय के मूल्य हैं।

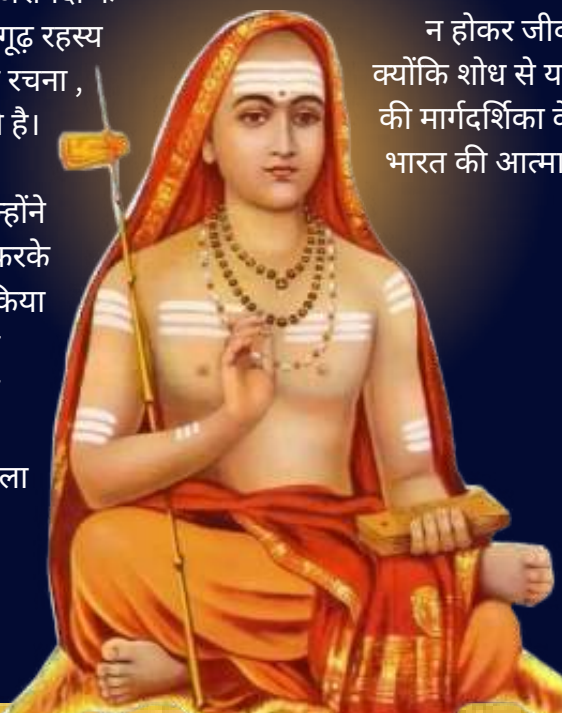
केवल इसी प्रकार हम उपनिषदों के असली महत्व को समझ सकते हैं। क्योंकि उपनिषद् के अध्यात्मिक अर्थ को छोड़ कर इनके अंदर निहित को संस्कृति की झलक है, तथा विभिन्न व्यक्तियों के बीच, विभिन्न घटनाओं को साक्षी मानकर हम उपनिषद् के महत्व और भी अधिक पहचान पाएंगे। ऐसा कोई शोध हमें दिखाई नहीं पड़ता है जिसमें उपनिषदीय संस्कृति एवं मानवीय मूल्यों और अध्ययन किया हो।

हमारे शोध के मुख्य ३ लक्ष्य होंगे –

उपनिषद् में निहित लोगों के बीच वाद-विवाद, परस्पर संवाद, प्रश्न उत्तर, मंत्र उपदेश का अध्ययन कर एक विशिष्ट उपनिषदिक संस्कृति की खोज कर सामने लाना। उपनिषदों में ही इन संवादों एवं मंत्र उपदेशों से प्राप्त होने वाले मानवीय एवं नैतिक मूल्यों की पड़ताल करना जो उस काल में प्रचलित थे। तथा अंतिम तथा अति महत्वपूर्ण इस संस्कृति और मूल्यों को आज के भारत से जोड़ना तथा ये साबित करना की उपनिषद् की संस्कृति ही किसी न किसी रूप भारतीय संस्कृति है।

इस शोध से हम उपनिषदों के एक नए पहलू को जान पाएंगे तथा युवाओं में उपनिषदों के प्रति जिज्ञासा बढ़ाने में यह सहायक होगा। उपनिषद् केवल आध्यात्मिक ज्ञान तक सीमित

न होकर जीवन के हर पहलू में हमें सहायता करते हैं, क्योंकि शोध से यह साबित होगा की उपनिषद् जीवन जीने की मार्गदर्शिका के रूप में भी अपनाए जा सकते हैं। तथा भारत की आत्मा के रूप में किस प्रकार ये उपनिषद् कार्य करते हैं।



कार्यप्रणाली

हमारा अनुसंधान इस प्रश्न से प्रारंभ होता है की क्या उपनिषदों में केवल ब्रह्म- आत्मा – मोक्ष के अलावा कुछ ऐसी बातें हैं जो हमें एक जीवन जीने का तरीका सिखाए जिसकी वजह से हम उपनिषदों युवाओं के लिए एक मार्गदर्शिका के रूप में देख पाएं ? क्या हम उपनिषद के श्लोकों से उस समय की संस्कृति एवम् मानवीय मूल्यों को ढूंढ सकते हैं ? अर्थात् हमारा मुख्य प्रश्न उपनिषदों में एक मार्गदर्शिका को ढूंढने का और कर्म उपदेश की खोज करने को रहेगा । तथा दूसरा प्रश्न है की क्या आज के भारत की संस्कृति का मूल उपनिषद् की संस्कृति में देखा जा सकता है ?

उपनिषदों को लेकर अनुसंधान करने और हमारे प्रश्न के उत्तर जानने के लिए हमारे पास अनेकों स्रोत हैं जिनमें कुछ प्राथमिक तथा द्वितीयक स्रोत भी शामिल हैं । प्राथमिक स्रोत मूल संस्कृत में हैं परंतु उन श्लोकों का यथार्थ एवं विश्वसनीय हिंदी अनुवाद गीताप्रेस गोरखपुर प्रकाशन द्वारा किया गया है । हमने गीताप्रेस गोरखपुर प्रकाशन द्वारा प्रकाशित एवं हिंदी में अनुवादित ११ मुख्य उपनिषदों को ही अनुसंधान का आधार बनाया है । जिनमें बृहदारण्यक एवं छांदोग्य उपनिषद के लिए आदिगुरु शंकराचार्य के भाष्य की भी सहायता ली गई है। तथा बाकी ९ उपनिषद हैं – ईश , केन , कठ , प्रश्न , मुण्डक , मांडूक्य, एतरेय , तैत्तिरेय , श्वेताश्वतर उपनिषद हैं। इन उपनिषदों को नमूना लेने का कारण यह भी है क्योंकि यही उपनिषद सबसे पुराने एवं मूल उपनिषद माने गए हैं । इसीलिए यही सबसे महत्वपूर्ण उपनिषद है जो हमें उपनिषदिय काल के बारे में बता पाएंगे ।

परिणाम

हमारे अनुसंधान के प्रश्न को ध्यान में रखते हुए हमने उपनिषद के श्लोकों का यथार्थ विश्लेषण किया तथा यह इस शोध में हमें पर्याप्त मात्रा में उस समय की शिक्षा प्रणाली , युवाओं के लिए उपदेश , सामाजिक व्यवस्था तथा उसमें महिलाओं की भूमिका , ज्ञानी एवं अज्ञानी में भेद , उचित धर्म और उसकी व्याख्या , उचित नैतिक एवं मानवीय मूल्य (सत्य , दान , अहिंसा इत्यादि) , सभी प्राणियों में एकत्ववाद की भावना दिखाई पड़ती है । इन सब विषयों पर हम एक एक करके प्रकाश डालेंगे ।

उपनिषदों में सबसे पहले गुरु और शिष्य के संबंध को दर्शाया गया है इसके लिए तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद् में कहा गया है “ सह नौ यशः “ (तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद्, शिखषावल्ली, तृतीय अनुवाक) इसमें आचार्य ईश्वर को प्रार्थना कर रहे हैं की हम आचार्य और शिष्य दोनों का यश एक साथ बढ़े , इसके अलावा तथा गुरु और शिष्य को विद्या विषयक संहिता पूर्व वर्ण और परवर्ण कहा गया है गुरु और शिष्य के मिलने से ही विद्या प्रकट होती है (तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद्, शिखषावल्ली, तृतीय अनुवाक) । विद्यार्थियों के गुणों का भी उपदेश उपनिषद करते हैं जो की हैं -तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद् में गुरु अपने शिष्य के लिए उपयुक्त गुण बताते हैं की उनका शिष्य कपटशून्य हो , तथा प्रमाणिक ज्ञान का ही ग्रहण करने वाला हो (तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद्, शिखषावल्ली, चतुर्थ अनुवाक) । इस प्रकार हमें उपनिषद में गुरु शिष्य का संबंध और शिष्य कैसा हो उसका उपदेश करते हैं ।

अनुसंधान को लेकर हमारी परिकल्पना है की उपनिषद की संस्कृति ही मूल भारतीय संस्कृति है तथा उपनिषद के मानवीय मूल्य ही हमारे मानवीय मूल्य हैं । तथा उपनिषद केवल अध्यात्मिक उपदेश वाली पुस्तकें न होकर जीवन जीने की मार्गदर्शिका के रूप में उपयोग में लाई जा सकती है । उपनिषद में समय समय पर कर्म योग का उपदेश भी दिया गया है । तथा उपनिषदों के नैतिक मूल्य अंध विश्वास से परे एक उदारवादी एवं खुली सोच वाली संस्कृति को बढ़ावा देते हैं ।

अनुसंधान के लिए उचित दृष्टिकोण इस शोध पत्र का महत्वपूर्ण अंग है। हमने उपनिषदों को केवल आध्यात्मिक ग्रंथ नहीं माना है परंतु एक ऐतिहासिक प्रमाणिक ग्रंथ की तरह देखा है जिस प्रकार वाल्मीकि रामायण को माना है । इसमें हो रही वाद संवाद , घटनाओं को सच में घटित हुआ ही माना गया है क्योंकि अधिकतर शोधक इन कहानियों को ज्ञान देने के लिए उपयोग की गई काल्पनिक कहानियां मानते हैं लेकिन हमने इनको प्रमाणिक एवम् सत्य माना है । ऐसा इसलिए आवश्यक है क्योंकि उस समय की घटनाओं , नैतिक विचारों , लोगों के बीच में संबंधों को समझने के लिए हमें इन श्लोकों को यथार्थ मानना होगा ना की इन श्लोकों के अंदर किसी अध्यात्मिक रहस्य को खोजना चाहिए। उपनिषद काल्पनिक नहीं ऐतिहासिक तथ्य से निहित ग्रंथ है । उपनिषद् की संस्कृति को ही भारतीय संस्कृति माना गया है क्योंकि उपनिषद् दर्शन की दृष्टि में बाकी दर्शनों के अपेक्षाकृत अधिक प्राचीन है और बाकी दर्शनों को प्रभावित किया है।

इस शोध में उपनिषदों के श्लोकों का सही और ईमानदार तरीके से उपयोग सुनिश्चित किया गया है। सभी स्रोतों और अनुवादकों का उचित संदर्भ और सम्मान दिया गया है। चूंकि इस अध्ययन में कोई मानव विषय शामिल नहीं थे, इसलिए गोपनीयता और सूचित सहमति के प्रश्न प्रासंगिक नहीं थे।

सत्य भाषण को अति महत्वपूर्ण माना गया है (तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद्, शिखषावल्ली, नवम अनुवाक) , सत्य को ही परमात्मा का परम धाम बताया गया है और सत्य ही विजयी होता है (मुण्डकोपनिषद् 3.1.6) ।

इसके अलावा तप , मन को वश में रखना , स्वाध्याय के महत्व को जानने के लिए भी बोला गया (तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद्, शिखषावल्ली, नवम अनुवाक) । दान , तप , अहिंसा को आत्मरूपी यज्ञ उपासना में आहुति के रूप में दर्शाया गया (छांदोग्य , 3.17.4) । तथा जो व्यक्ति कपट , झूठ और कुटिल बुद्धि वाले होते हैं उनके लिए ब्रह्मलोक के द्वार कभी नहीं खुलते (प्रश्न उपनिषद् 1.16) ।

ऐसा मालूम होता है की उपनिषद् काल में अतिथि सत्कार एक विशेष स्थान ग्रहण करता है क्योंकि मुण्डक उपनिषद् के अनुसार अतिथि सत्कार एक विश्व कल्याण का कार्य है (मुण्डक उपनिषद् 1.2.3) । “अतिथि देवो भव” इस वाक्य से आज हम सब परिचित हैं यह भी एक उपनिषद् का संदेश है (तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद्, शिखषावल्ली, एकादश अनुवाक) । घर आए अतिथि का हमेशा अन्न से सत्कार करना चाहिए ये भी बताया गया है।

दान एवं भिक्षु के विषय में उपदेश कुछ इस प्रकार है की भिक्षु को प्रजापति का ही रूप माना गया है (छांदोग्य 4.3.6) । छांदोग्य उपनिषद् कहता दान करने वाले व्यक्ति को देवलोक का सुख मिलता है (5.10.3) । ऋषि उषुस्ति को एक महावत द्वारा दान मांगने पर अपने बच्चे खुचे उड़द तक दे देना इस बात को प्रमाणित करता है भिक्षु को कभी खाली नहीं भोजना चाहिए उसके पश्चात उषुस्ती भी इस महावत द्वारा जल दिए जाने को मना कर यह उदाहरण देते हैं की दान हमेशा आवश्यकता अनुसार लेना चाहिए (छांदोग्य 1.10.2-3) ।

सभी मनुष्य में एकत्व की भावना उपनिषदों का एक मुख्य भाव है , उपनिषदों में सभी प्राणियों को ब्रह्म ही माना गया है इसके लिए अनेक श्लोक हैं जैसे मैं ब्रह्म हूं (बृहदारण्यक 1.4.10) तुम भी वही ब्रह्म हो (छांदोग्य उपनिषद् 6.10.3) । यह ईश्वर सबका है (मांडूक्य 1.6) ।

यहां आस पास जो भी हम देखते हैं यह सब आत्मा ही है (छांदोग्य 7.26.1) । ईश्वर का हमें बनाने में कोई पक्षपात नहीं है तथा मनुष्य अपने कर्म से ही सुख और दुख पैदा करता है (मुण्डक 1.1.7 , 1.1.8)। सभी जातियां भी एक ही ब्रह्म से बनी हैं और उसी का अलग अलग रूप हैं (बृहदारण्यक 1.4.15) । इस प्रकार उपनिषद् सभी प्राणियों में एकत्व का भाव बना रहे हैं ।

इसके साथ मनुष्य के कुछ कार्यों को निषेध भी बताया गया है जैसे की – कपट , झूठ कुटिलता ये दुष्कर्म हैं (प्रश्न .16) , सुवर्ण का चोर , शराबी , गुरु की स्त्री से सहवास करने वाला , ब्रह्म हत्यारा इन सबके साथ आचरण करने वाले का भी पतन निश्चित बताया गया है (छांदोग्य 5.10.9) । छांदोग्य उपनिषद् में उषुस्ति कथा से हमें यह बताया गया है की बिना ज्ञान के किया गया कर्म आपके विनाश का कारण बन सकता है (1.11) ।

अपने घर के अंदर भी किस प्रकार माता पिता के साथ व्यवहार करना चाहिए इसके बारे में प्रसिद्ध वाक्य है “मात्रिदेवः भव” , “पितृदेवः भव” अर्थात् माता और पिता को देवरूप समझना चाहिए (तैत्तिरीय 1.11) । कठ उपनिषद् में नाचिकता द्वारा अपने प्रथम वर में ही यमराज से अपने पिता का स्नेह मांग लेना उपनिषद् संस्कृति का उदाहरण है । गर्भवती स्त्री विशेष रूप से पालन योग्य है तथा पुत्र ही पिता का समाज में प्रतिनिधि है इस बात का उपदेश किया गया है (एतरेय 2.1.3 – 2.1.4) । इससे गृह में रहने के उचित सदाचार का उपदेश दिया गया है ।

उपनिषद् काल में महिलाओं के प्रतिनिधित्व में हमें मैत्रेयी का नाम दिखाई पड़ता है जो की बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् में याज्ञवल्क्य की पत्नी हैं और धन संपदा को त्याग कर ज्ञान प्राप्त करने के लिए अपने पति के साथ ही सन्यास ले लेती हैं (2.4.2) । तथा जनक के दरबार में किस प्रकार मैत्रेयी ऋषि याज्ञवल्क्य से एक से एक कठिन प्रश्न पूछती हैं यह उनकी विदुषी होने को दर्शाती है (बृहदारण्यक 2.4) और दरबार में स्त्रियों को भी बराबर विद्वानों में रखने का संकेत देता है ।

अंत में एवं सबसे महत्वपूर्ण हमें उपनिषद् धर्म के तीन स्कंध के बारे में बता रहा है जो की है – जिसका पहला स्कंध यज्ञ , अध्ययन और दान है । दूसरा स्कंध तप है । तथा तीसरा ब्रह्मचारी द्वारा आचार्यकुल में अपने शरीर को बिलकुल क्षीण कर लेना है अर्थात् आचार्य के अनुसार ही जीवन जीना है (छांदोग्य 2.23.1)। इस प्रकार अध्ययन और दान आदि लोक कल्याण के कार्य को उपनिषद् धर्म केंद्र में रख रहे हैं ।



उपनिषद् केवल अध्यात्मिक उपदेश न देकर कर्म करने के लिए भी उपदेश दे रहे हैं क्योंकि ईशावास्योपनिषद् कहता है की को व्यक्ति शास्त्रोक्त कर्म नहीं करता वह अज्ञानी है और हमें शास्त्रोक्त निष्काम करने की इच्छा से ही १०० वर्ष जीने की इच्छा करनी चाहिए (ईशावास्योपनिषद् मंत्र 1, 2)। तथा कर्म और ज्ञान के में से ही ईश्वर को पाया जा सकता है (मंत्र 11)। इससे हमें कर्म का भी महत्व दिखाई देता है।

इस प्रकार हम उपनिषदों में गुरु शिष्य परंपरा, दान, सत्य से लेकर अनेकों मानवीय मूल्य और अतिथि, माता पिता आदि लौकिक व्यवहार को लेकर अनेकों उपदेश मिलते हैं। तथा अति महत्वपूर्ण हमें धर्म का आधार अध्ययन और दान आदि कर्मों में बताया जाता है। यह सब उस समय की संस्कृति को दर्शाते हैं, हमारे अनुसंधान में हर श्लोक को पढ़कर हमने इस प्रकार उपनिषदों से संस्कृति और मानवीय मूल्य निकाले हैं।

इन सब तथ्यों को देखकर यह बात प्रतीत होती है की को आज भारत के मानवीय मूल्य है इन सब की जड़ उपनिषदों में हम देख पा रहे हैं। इस विषय पर आगे चर्चा की जाएगी।

चर्चा

हमारी इन १२ मुख्य उपनिषदों पर किए गए शोध से हमें पता चलता है उपनिषद् हमें जीवन के हर पहलू पर मार्गदर्शन दे रहा है, अर्थात् यह हमारे शोध के प्रश्न जो की क्या उपनिषद् अध्यात्म के अलावा एक कर्म प्रधान समाज के लिए मार्गदर्शिका का कार्य कर सकती? इस प्रश्न को संतुष्ट करता है।

उपनिषदों को ही भारतीय संस्कृति मानने की हमारी परिकल्पना को हमारी खोज में पाए गए परिणाम साफ संतुष्ट कर रहे हैं। अतिथि देवो भव आज भी हमारी संस्कृति का एक महत्वपूर्ण अंग है, २०२३ में हुए जी२० सम्मेलन में भारत द्वारा दिया गया महावाक्य “वसुधैव कुटुंबकम्” भी उपनिषद् से सिंचित एकत्व की भावना को ही आगे बढ़ा रहा है। आज देश के हर न्यायालय में लिखा महावाक्य “सत्यमेव जयते” यानी की सत्य ही विजय होता है, भी उपनिषद् की ही देन है। उपनिषदों ने हमेशा अध्यात्म के ज्ञान और कर्म को महत्व दिया जिसकी वजह से भारत विश्व गुरु कहलाया, उपनिषद् का एक अति महत्वपूर्ण वाक्य है “उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत॥” (कठोपनिषद् 1.3.14)

इसका अर्थ है – उठो, जागो, और जानकार श्रेष्ठ पुरुषों के सान्निध्य में ज्ञान प्राप्त करो। यह वाक्य आज भी सभी युवाओं को प्रेरणा देने का कार्य करता है।

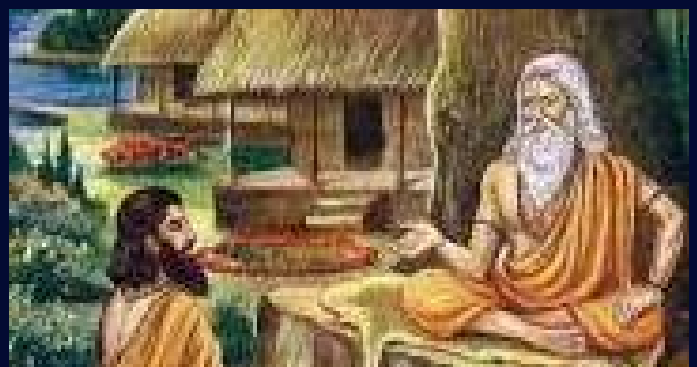
उपनिषदों में उल्लेखित गुरु शिष्य परंपरा हज़ारों वर्षों तक भारत में उसी प्रकार फलती फूलती रही उसी संस्कृति के

कारण हमें विवेकानंद, आदिगुरु शंकराचार्य, भास्कराचार्य जैसे महापुरुष मिले तथा इन उपनिषदों के ज्ञान को रखने वाले गुरुओं के कारण ही भारत में महान योद्धा चंद्रगुप्त मौर्य, छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज जैसे शूरवीर मिले। हालांकि पाश्चात्य संस्कृति के प्रभाव के कारण आज ये संस्कृति खत्म होने की कगार पर है, परंतु जब तक गुरु शिष्य परंपरा थी ये देश विश्वगुरु था।

उपनिषद् काल में हमें एक कट्टर जाति व्यवस्था दिखाई नहीं पड़ती जैसा की हमने खोज में उल्लेख किया है की सभी जातियां एक ही परमात्मा से बनी हैं ये उपदेश दिया गया है। इसके अलावा किस प्रकार सत्यकाम को अपना कुल तथा जाति का ज्ञान न होने पर ऋषि गौतम को सत्य बात बताकर खुद की जाती को जाबाली बताता है क्योंकि उसकी माता का नाम जाबाल था, सत्यकाम की इस सत्यनिष्ठा को देख ऋषि गौतम उनको ब्राह्मण की संज्ञा देते हैं और अपना शिष्य बना लेते हैं (छांदोग्य उपनिषद् 4.4)। इससे हमें पता चलता है की उपनिषद् काल में जाति व्यवस्था इतनी ठोस रूप में कार्य नहीं करती थी तथा कर्म के आधार पर जाति निर्धारित होती थी।

मैं ही ब्रह्म हूं, तुम भी ब्रह्म हो” इस प्रकार के उपनिषद् वाक्य सभी मनुष्यों को अपने सामर्थ्य पर गौरवान्वित महसूस करवाते हैं तथा हम भारतीय स्वाभिमानी होते हैं (घमंडी नहीं)। मुण्डकोपनिषद् के पहले श्लोक में जीवात्मा और परमात्मा को एक पेड़ पर बैठे २ पक्षियों की तरह बताया गया है परंतु आगे चलकर नौवें श्लोक में यह भी कहा गया है की परमात्मा को जान लेने से जीवात्मा भी ब्रह्म बन सकता है। इस प्रकार को बातें हमें ज्ञान के प्रति अधिक जिज्ञासु बनाती हैं।

इस संस्कृति में हमेशा ज्ञान और ज्ञानियों के प्रति हमेशा विशेष सम्मान रहा, यह इसी ज्ञान की जिज्ञासा थी जिसने यमराज को नचिकेता जैसे बालक को वर देने और ब्रह्म ज्ञान देने पर मजबूर कर दिया (कठोपनिषद्)। हमने ज्ञानी एवं सज्जन मनुष्यों को भगवान की संज्ञा तक दी जिस प्रकार भगवान महावीर और भगवान बुद्ध कहा जाता है यथापि वे वैदिक मान्यताओं को नहीं मानते थे परंतु उपनिषद् से प्रभावित समाज और संस्कृति ने इनको भी सहर्ष स्वीकारा तथा भगवान की संज्ञा दी।



उपनिषद् केवल अध्यात्मिक उपदेश न देकर कर्म करने के लिए भी उपदेश दे रहे हैं क्योंकि ईशावास्योपनिषद् कहता है की को व्यक्ति शास्त्रोक्त कर्म नहीं करता वह अज्ञानी है और हमें शास्त्रोक्त निष्काम करने की इच्छा से ही १०० वर्ष जीने की इच्छा करनी चाहिए (ईशावास्योपनिषद् मंत्र 1, 2)। तथा कर्म और ज्ञान के में से ही ईश्वर को पाया जा सकता है (मंत्र 11)। इससे हमें कर्म का भी महत्व दिखाई देता है।

इस प्रकार हम उपनिषदों में गुरु शिष्य परंपरा, दान, सत्य से लेकर अनेकों मानवीय मूल्य और अतिथि, माता पिता आदि लौकिक व्यवहार को लेकर अनेकों उपदेश मिलते हैं। तथा अति महत्वपूर्ण हमें धर्म का आधार अध्ययन और दान आदि कर्मों में बताया जाता है। यह सब उस समय की संस्कृति को दर्शाते हैं, हमारे अनुसंधान में हर श्लोक को पढ़कर हमने इस प्रकार उपनिषदों से संस्कृति और मानवीय मूल्य निकाले हैं। इन सब तथ्यों को देखकर यह बात प्रतीत होती है की को आज भारत के मानवीय मूल्य है इन सब की जड़ उपनिषदों में हम देख पा रहे हैं। इस विषय पर आगे चर्चा की जाएगी।

चर्चा

वर्तमान काल में जिस प्रकार युवाओं तथा भारतीय समाज द्वारा उपनिषदों को केवल एक आध्यात्मिक और गूढ़ ज्ञान वाला ग्रंथ समझ कर नकार दिया गया उस स्थिति के लिए यह शोध अतिआवश्यक मानना चाहिए क्योंकि यह शोध इस बात को स्पष्ट करता है उपनिषद् ही इस संस्कृति का मूल है और सभी मनुष्यों के लिए एक मार्गदर्शिका का कार्य करता है। यह उपनिषद् ही हमें एक बहुत ही प्रभावशाली और उदारवादी मानवीय मूल्यों का उपदेश देते हैं जो किसी भी व्यक्ति के लिए बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण है। यह शोध सभी मुख्य उपनिषदों पर आधारित रखा गया है। हमें उपनिषदों के प्रति अपनी पुरानी धारणा को छोड़ इस शोध में प्रमाणित नई एवं उचित और मूल धारणा को अपनाना चाहिए तथा भारतीय संस्कृति और सशक्त करने के लिए उपनिषदों को यूवाओं के बीच लाना चाहिए। उपनिषद् के प्रति यही अवधारणा हमारी संस्कृति को जीवंत रखने के लिए अतिआवश्यक है। उपनिषद् की मूल भावना को अभिव्यक्त करने में यह शोध महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएगा।

आभार

मैं अपनी सहपाठिनी, कृषा, को तहे दिल से धन्यवाद देना चाहता हूँ। उन्होंने मेरे शोध पत्र के हर चरण में सही अनुक्रमण और समीक्षा में अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है। उनके समर्थन और मार्गदर्शन के बिना, इस कार्य को पूर्ण करना संभव नहीं होता। उनके निरंतर प्रोत्साहन और सहायता के लिए मैं सदा आभारी रहूँगा।

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ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM AND ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES AT THE GOLPAHARI MANDIR

SANJANA

ABSTRACT

Sustainable ecotourism promotes environmental care (including nature, forests, rivers, and wildlife) with an entrepreneurial spirit, fostering a peaceful relationship between travellers and local communities. Ecotourism also emphasizes responsible travel without harming natural areas, aiming to conserve the environment, indigenous culture, and promote economic benefits for local populations in a sustainable way. Entrepreneurs in this sector play an important role by developing ventures that uphold principles that promote sustainability and conserve the environment and indigenous culture, ensuring that tourism activities do not exploit but rather enrich the destinations they showcase.

A main aspect of sustainable ecotourism is community empowerment and involvement. It gives a good opportunity to local residents in the planning and execution of tourism, transforming them from passive observers into active Stakeholders. This involvement uplifts the backgrounds of locals and provides economic support. This also instills a responsibility towards preserving cultural and natural treasures through awareness among locals and visitors.

Environmental conservation is integrated into the business models of ecotourism entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is the aim of starting and scaling a business. It also helps in transforming small-scale work into a business. Entrepreneurship with sustainability means the development and growth of business along with environmental conservation. This can happen by offering eco-friendly accommodation, promoting waste reduction (reducing the use of plastic wrappers), and organizing activities with the help of the government that educate visitors

about environmental issues. These ventures minimize the ecological footprint of tourism. Located between the serene and scenic landscape of Jamshedpur, the temple is located on top of a hill, having a wide range of flora and fauna. The rich region of the Golpahari mandir also offers immense potential for the development of sustainable ecotourism.



This study aims to deal with problems that inhibit sustainable ecotourism and entrepreneurship ventures, such as poor infrastructure development, lack of proper sanitation, and discuss the solutions to these problems

Keywords: Sustainable, ecotourism, community, ecological, entrepreneurship ventures

INTRODUCTION



Nature and spirituality have long been interwoven in India's rich cultural legacy. As evidenced by customs such as the worship of rivers, forests, and mountains, as well as the preservation of sacred groves, Indian philosophy has long placed a strong emphasis on the harmonious coexistence of humans and the environment. These traditional sustainability ideals, which are ingrained in Indian literature and daily life, provide a solid basis for contemporary ecotourism strategies. The Golpahari Mandir offers a chance to investigate how traditional sustainable practices can assist modern ecotourism and entrepreneurial endeavours, given its location in an area of spiritual and ecological significance also adds to its uniqueness.

The Golpahari mandir is renowned for its legend, according to which, in 1900, a woman named Ramadai Devi from Uttar Pradesh came to live in Jamshedpur. She lived

with her daughter in a small hut at the bottom of the hill. One night, a goddess appeared in her dream and instructed her to worship a stone idol situated on the hill where the temple is now located. The geographic

coordinates of the Golpahari Mata temple are approximately 22.7617°N latitude and 86.2078°E longitude.

Approximately more than 100 steps are there to climb to reach at the top hill. The area not only has impressive beauty but also holds a deep cultural and spiritual significance. This place is surrounded by hills having greenery. It has a wide range of flora and fauna, which gives a relaxing environment while traveling and visiting, and provides opportunities for sustainable ecotourism and entrepreneurship. The presence of the tribal population adds to its uniqueness by protecting the plants and environment. These locals have opportunities to integrate local traditions and crafts into tourism experiences in a respectful and mutually beneficial manner. However, any development in this region must be approached with sensitivity to environmental conservation. Travelers are encouraged to choose accommodations that adhere to sustainable practices, such as water conservation and energy efficiency, thereby supporting the preservation of natural resources.



To minimize environmental damage while promoting tourism and entrepreneurship, consider a way to achieve sustainability and strike a balance between development and conservation is important. This goal will be achieved by encouraging eco-friendly practices such as using renewable energy, reducing waste, and supporting local biodiversity. Entrepreneurs can play a key role by offering nature-based experiences that educate visitors and foster respect for the environment

To reduce environmental impact, local communities also play an important role, such as many trees which are protected by locals in the form of sacred groves. These balancing conservation efforts with the help of local communities, we will acquire sustainable eco-tourism and entrepreneurship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. LU/LC change detection and Forest Degradation Analysis in Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary using 3s Technology.

Review: 3s Technology is effective for studying land use/ Land cover due to shifting cultivation, forest fire, and conservation of forest cover into crop land settlement encroachment in forest regions by villagers, causing deforestation, which hampers the living of elephants and destroys the “DWLS”. This study shows that the agricultural expansion is a key driver of land-cover changes in protected areas. This also shows the change of land cover in Dalma and the patterns of deforestation and urbanization in the sanctuary. Human-induced activities can be tracked and analyzed using 3s technology.

2. An Investigation of the local community's perceptions towards eco-tourism in Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary Jharkhand, India.

Review: This study examines Eco-tourism in Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Jharkhand, India, which has gained prominence as a means to promote environmental conservation and socio-economic development. Local residents perceive eco-tourism as a catalyst for economic growth, providing employment opportunities and enhancing livelihoods. The challenges faced by government officials in developing and managing eco-tourism within the sanctuary, as well as exploring the opportunities that have yet to be fully realized. It also investigates the perception of local residents towards eco-tourism. Data collection from personal interviews and observations was carried out to gather insights on local perceptions. After that data analysis took place. Ecotourism is viewed as a tool for local communities. It also creates awareness about environmental conservation

3. Challenges and opportunities for eco-tourism development in Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary.

Review: The development of eco-tourism in “DWLS” has been the subject of research aiming to identify existing challenges and potential opportunities. The study sought to identify and address the inherent challenges faced by government officials in developing and managing eco-tourism activities, and conducted surveys with tourists and local communities. IT also highlighted the sanctuaries and natural and cultural potential, as well as challenges like a lack of infrastructure and community involvement.

4. Evaluating local livelihoods, sustainable forest management, and the potential for ecotourism development in ‘Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary’.

Review: This study evaluates the interplay between local livelihoods, sustainable forest management, and the potential for ecotourism development on Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary. This study addresses the pressing issue of forest degradation in Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary and its detrimental impact on the livelihoods of local communities. The research investigates how integrating local communities into forest management can help to explain alternative income sources. These researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Semi-structured interviews, surveys, on on-site observation are the research methods.

5. Indigenous knowledge of Santhal Tribes of Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, Jharkhand, India.

Review: This study explores the traditional ecological knowledge of the Santhal tribal community residing in the sanctuary. This research was to document and analyze the indigenous knowledge of the Santhal tribes concerning the utilization of medicinal plants within the sanctuary. This also aimed to bridge the gap between traditional practices and modern conservation efforts.

The researchers conducted extensive field surveys in the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, engaging directly with the Santhal tribal communities. Through interviews and participatory observations, they recorded the various plant species used by the tribes for medicinal purposes. The study focused on identifying the plants, documenting their traditional uses, and classifying them based on their therapeutic application. Out of 417 plant species recorded in the study area, the research provided detailed data on 30 medicinal plants belonging to 19 biodiversity regions and extensive knowledge of the tribal communities.

6. Tree Diversity, stand structure, and community composition of tropical forest in Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary.

Review: The researchers conducted a comprehensive field study across various altitudinal zones within the sanctuary, ranging from 199 to 603 meters. They employed systematic sampling techniques to collect data on stem density, basal area, species diversity indices, beta diversity, girth classes, canopy height, and species composition. This approach allowed for a detailed. This research aimed to assess the species diversity, stand structure, and community composition of tree species in the tropical forest. Understanding these ecological parameters is crucial for effective conservation and management strategies. The study identified a total of 41 tree species across 25 families within the sanctuary

7. Ecotourism – Innovative Way for Sustainable Development.

Review: This research article highlights an innovative idea for eco-tourism from a sustainability perspective. Ecotourism has emerged as a significant approach to achieving sustainable development by combining responsible travel practices with environmental conservation and community well-being. The International Ecotourism Society defines Ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.” Ecotourism is a cultural tourism that incorporates the idea of sustainability. Types of ecotourism were provided by Lindberg (1991). The types, as stated by

Lindberg, Hard-core type, Dedicated type, Mainstream type, Casual type. Ecotourists vary from destination to destination due to several aspects: distance travelled, the length of stay, the desired level of physical effort and comfort, the importance of nature in trip motivation, the level of learning desired, the amount of spending, desired activities, and personal demographics.

Six principles have been given by the Ecotourism Society for conserving the environment that are:

1. avoids negative impacts that can damage or destroy the character of the natural or cultural environments being visited.

2. educates the traveller on the importance of conservation.

3. directs revenues to the conservation of natural areas and the management of protected areas.

4. brings economic benefits to local communities and directs revenues to local people living near the protected areas.

5. It emphasizes the need for planning and sustainable growth of the tourism industry and seeks to ensure that tourism development does not exceed the social and environmental “capacity.”

6. It retains a high percentage of revenues in the host country by stressing the use of locally-owned facilities and services.

This research also stated that in India, many basic facilities are lacking in ecotourism establishments, such as problems like a lack of community involvement even in cases where the local community is projected as beneficiaries. Conflict between the idea of ecotourism and the policies of the tourism sector. The primary focus of the tourism sector is to profit from infrastructure development, which will attract many tourists. Unlike the tourism sector, the idea of ecotourism is to conserve the environment while visiting a tourism spot.

8. Ecological Biodiversity of Panchet Forest Division and Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary.

Review: A detailed characterisation of the human-elephant conflict zone. Here, this describes both the source and destination regions, providing information on their location, physiographic, climate, natural vegetation, and administrative characteristics. A spatial analysis of heterogeneity was calculated through different patch metrics, including edge density, forest core, patch shape and evidence, and nearest-neighbour metrics, using FRAGSTATS, ArcGIS software. The ecological biodiversity of protected areas like Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary and the Panchet Forest Division is critical for informed conservation and management practices, species habitat, and distribution. Threats to biodiversity are the main problem that hampers ecological biodiversity

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Golpahari Mandir has the potential to be a sustainable ecotourism destination, and it also offers good opportunities for local vendors and artisans to expand their businesses. However, several challenges hinder its development—issues such as environmental concerns, lack of infrastructure, and others. As such, the *temenos* does not have many problems related to the environment. The area around the temple is polluted by tourism activities. Many tourists buy packets of Mauli, Dhoop, Agarbatti, Camphor, Chandan, and Kumkum, then leave the wrappers of these things there. The wrappers are made up of plastic, which mixes with the soil and pollutes the soil. Unregulated tourism activities without proper guidance also cause environmental concern. Infrastructure deficiencies are poor road conditions, such as potholes on the road. Visitors come here throughout the year, yet there are very limited economic activities around it. Safety concern and a lack of knowledge prevents many visitors from exploring the site. At the top of the hill where the Mandir stands, there is a lack of barricades. The lack of structured management and promotion of eco-friendly tourism also affects the sustainable utilization of resources and economic opportunities for the local community.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To identify barriers to ecotourism development at Golpahari Mandir.

1. This research will provide data about the barriers that hamper the ecotourism development at Golpahari Mandir by examining visitors' perceptions, accessibility challenges, and safety concerns. Investigating how the lack of information prevents visitors from exploring the site and identifying strategies to overcome these barriers.

2. To evaluate environmental degradation risks.

Assessing the effect of pollution, deforestation, and unregulated tourism activities on the temple surroundings and exploring conservation-driven ecotourism models.

3. To explore potential entrepreneurial opportunities in sustainable tourism.

This research will provide great opportunities for Potential entrepreneurial opportunities, such as eco-friendly accommodations, organic food stalls, and cultural tourism, which can enhance the visitor experience and local economic growth. It also gives an idea to tackle the problem that inhibits the opportunities.

4. To examine the role of local communities in ecotourism development and opportunities for their participation in tourism-related entrepreneurship.

The research will delve into how ecotourism influences the local community. It will assess whether tourism has led to increased job opportunities, improved income levels, and the preservation of cultural traditions. At the same time, the study will evaluate the environmental impact, such as changes in land use, stress on natural resources, and ecological balance, in order to understand both the positive and negative outcomes of tourism development at Golpahari.

5. To bridge the gap between challenges and sustainable opportunities.

Finally, the study will focus on developing practical recommendations to overcome the identified challenges. This involves suggesting improvements in infrastructure and policy coordination that can

foster a robust environment for sustainable ecotourism and local entrepreneurship. The objective is to create a clear roadmap that addresses current shortcomings while tapping into the valley's vast potential, ensuring long-term, balanced development.

Together, these objectives will guide the research in creating a comprehensive picture of the opportunities and challenges at Golpahari Mandir, ultimately aiming to transform these insights into actionable strategies for sustainable growth.

DATABASE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The database for this study on Golpahari Mandir, a culturally significant yet underdocumented temple site in Jamshedpur, was developed using a mix of primary field research and secondary data sources.

Primary Field Research:

Primary Field Research is an interview and field survey-based approach for data collection.

1. **Interviews:** A structured Google form-based questionnaire was used for the survey. The survey was conducted among respondents, including local residents, students, and tourists. These interviews delve into topics such as infrastructural challenges, site experiences, environmental observations, and suggestions for improvement.

2. **Field Surveys:** Site visits were conducted to understand the perspectives of visitors, local residents regarding Golpahari Mandir to evaluate its potential as a site for sustainable eco-tourism and local entrepreneurship.

Secondary data:

Secondary data is an approach for the survey based on literature review and geospatial data.

1. **Literature Review:** A Literature review is essential to understand the existing body of knowledge regarding sustainable tourism, conservation, which helps in sustainability and entrepreneurship in tourism. Articles and research papers on eco-tourism in Jharkhand.

2. **Geospatial Data:** It is an online source like Google Maps for geolocation and Google Earth. These online sources were used to map the geographical location of the temple, its accessibility, and surrounding

infrastructure. However, spatial planning and infrastructure upgrades are crucial for preserving its ecological integrity.

3. **Research design:** This study employs a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather data. The aim is to assess the tourism potential of the Golpahari mandir. This research design consists of certain steps:

1. Data collection
2. Sampling technique
3. Data Analysis

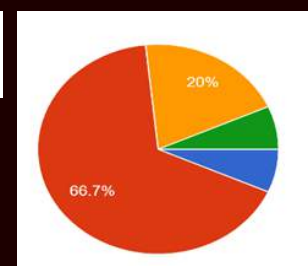
DATA BASED ON A SURVEY

1. Demographic Insights

Age Distribution:

- Majority (66.7%) were in the 31-50 age group
- 18-30 years: 20%
- Below 18 and 51+ : 6.7%each

2. Age:
15 responses

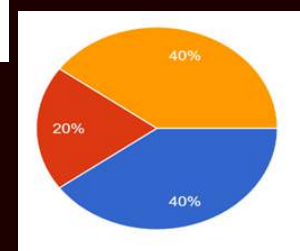


It indicates that most visitors are middle-aged

2. Community Engagement in Tourism

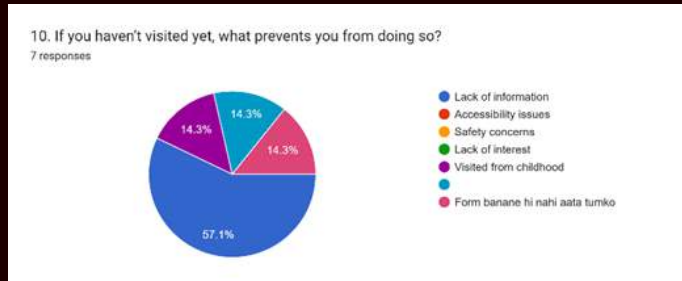
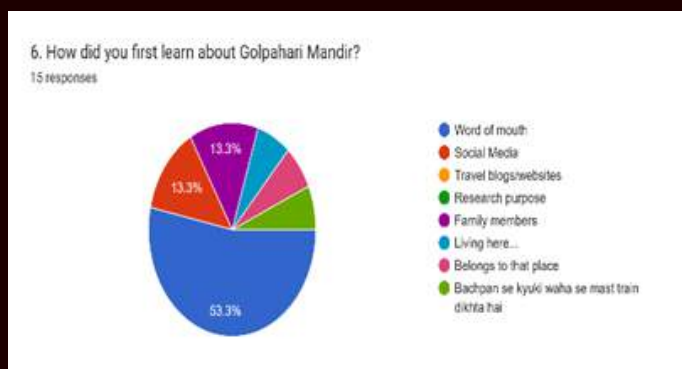
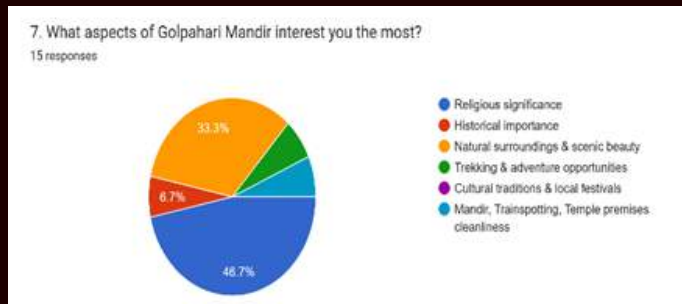
- 40% of respondents were locals, suggesting potential for community-based tourism initiatives.
- The rest are visitors and students.

5. Are you a:
15 responses



3. Visitors' Perception and Interest

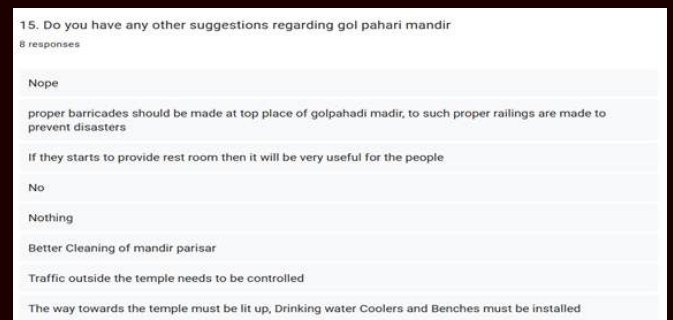
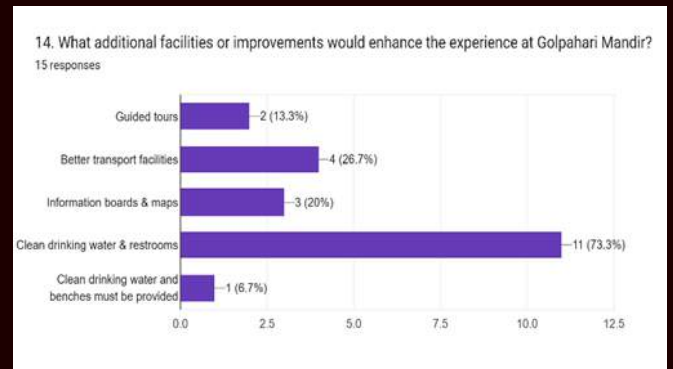
- The primary reason for visiting is religious and cultural significance (46.71%), and natural beauty (33.3%) were the most attractive feature.
- The rest of the percentage of respondents voted for Historical importance and trekking



A majority of respondents knew about the Golpahari Mandir through word of mouth, followed by family members. Most of the respondents lack information about this temple, that why they haven't visited here. The above information and data show that, here, word-of-mouth promotion dominates with limited digital marketing efforts.

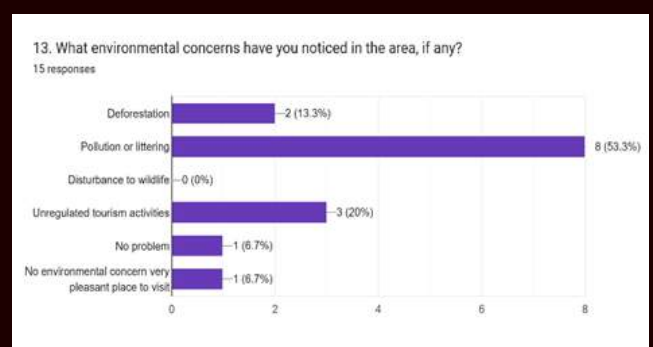
4. Visitor Satisfaction and Facilities Needed

Most visitors experience it as a good place to visit, but some have an average experience. They suggested infrastructure improvements such as clean drinking water and restrooms, better transport facilities, benches inside temple premises, and better lighting.



5. Environmental Degradation Risks and Conservation Strategies

- Pollution and littering were the most reported issues.
- Unregulated tourism activities also contributed to environmental degradation.
- Limited Deforestation was noted, but wildlife disturbance was not a major concern.



RESULT

The survey was conducted on sustainable ecotourism and entrepreneurship ventures at Golpahari Mandir, in which respondents gave their suggestions for sustainable ecotourism. This survey also highlighted the strong potential for sustainable ecotourism. The local community shows its concern towards environmental degradation risk, which was generally caused by the use of plastic bags and pollution due to littering. To reduce the environmental risk, they suggested installing dustbins and campaigning to raise awareness among the visitors and other locals. Establishing homestays and guestrooms to enhance tourist stays will encourage local businesses and also improve the visitor experience. There is a need for proper lighting and cleanliness around the temple for the betterment of visitors, which will enhance their experience.

Plan for Ecotourism Sustainability

A plan for ecotourism sustainability requires a multi-faced approach to circumscribe environmental protection, local community involvement, and economic benefits. It involves minimizing negative impact, engaging local communities, supporting conservation efforts, and promoting cultural exchange. This plan should also focus on sustainable business practices, efficient resource management, and raising awareness among visitors about environmental and cultural issues

Environmental Sustainability: Environmental Sustainability means developing a society without damaging or harming the environment. In another way, we can say that conservation of the environment while the development of society. We can conserve our natural resources by protecting local flora, fauna, and ecosystems. Limit tourist numbers in sensitive areas and promote reforestation and habitat restoration projects. Waste management and water conservation are other ways to protect and conserve the environment. The government should implement a strict policy regarding waste management and the conservation of the environment at tourist places. Promote the use of eco-friendly materials and avoid

the use of plastics. We can set up composting and recycling units and also promote low-impact transportation.

Community Involvement and Empowerment: It involves a group of individuals to protect and conserve the environment by contributing their time and effort. We can train and employ local people as guides, hospitality staff, and artisans. Sustainable ecotourism gives equal opportunities. We can also promote fair wages among locals. Community involvement in showcasing traditional arts, crafts, and customs fosters a sense of empowerment. We can build capacity by conducting workshops for locals on ecotourism, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. Support small-scale ecotourism businesses through cooperatives.

Economic Sustainability: Economic sustainability refers to the ability of economic growth without a negative impact on the environment and surroundings. It generates revenue through guided tours and local product sales. Local products and crafts should be organic and handmade, which supports sustainable ecotourism.

Entrepreneurship Promotion: It provides training and funding for eco-lodges, home stays, and nature-based tourism startups. It also supports women and youth entrepreneurship. We can also conduct orientation programs on sustainability and responsible behaviour.

Promote Sustainable Land Use and Environmental Conservation:

- **Adopt Integrated Land-Use Planning:** Implement zoning regulations that balance tourism development with environmental protection. Limit urban sprawl by designating specific areas for tourism infrastructure, while preserving natural and agricultural lands.
- **Encourage Eco-Friendly Practices:** Incentivize practices such as organic farming, renewable energy use, and waste management within the tourism sector to reduce the ecological footprint of development activities.



Plan for Ecotourism Sustainability at Golpahari Mandir (Suggestion)

Vision: Transform Golpahari Mandir into a resilient, eco-friendly tourism destination that boosts local business, preserves nature, and enhances community well-being.

1. Opportunities For Local Participation:

- Local tour guides: Training locals to offer guided temple and nature tours.
- Eco-friendly accommodations: Establishing reasonable & near homestays and guesthouses to enhance tourist stays.

Encouraging local businesses will not only improve the visitor experience but also generate income for residents.

2. Tourism Policies and Governance Model:

Tourism growth will be unregulated due to a lack of information and accessibility issues at the Golpahari Mandir. Government should develop structured ecotourism policies to regulate visitor activities. Encourage public-private partnerships to fund infrastructure projects. Improve online marketing strategies to attract tourists beyond the local region. Need for a tour guide which instruct the visitor not to throw plastic here and there.

3. Impact of Infrastructure Limitations:

We found that some facilities could be provided for the betterment of tourism.

- Improve road conditions and transport facilities.
- Installation of more lights near the temple.

- Installation of visitor information boards.
- Provides basic amenities like restrooms.

4. Conservation Strategies:

- Eco-friendly waste disposal: Install segregated dustbins and promote a no-plastic policy.
- Community-driven clean-up drives involving locals.
- Visitor awareness programs: Signboards, guided tours, and social media campaigns to educate tourists on responsible tourism.

5. Empower Local Communities:

Organize training and capacity-building programs in hospitality, eco-tourism management, and local crafts. Encourage community-led events to preserve culture and attract tourists.

6. Promote Environmental Conservation:

Implement sustainable land-use planning and conservation projects. Protect natural resources while allowing responsible tourism development.

7. Implementation and Monitoring:

- Partnership: Collaborate with local government, private investors, and community groups for funding and project management.
- Monitoring: Set clear goals and use periodic surveys and community feedback to track progress.

This management plan offers a clear, step-by-step approach to make the Golpahari Mandir a sustainable ecotourism destination and provides opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures by upgrading infrastructure, strengthening management, empowering communities, coordinating policies, and protecting the environment.



CONCLUSION

This research project has provided an in-depth exploration of the sustainable ecotourism and entrepreneurship ventures at Golpahari Mandir, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand. It has revealed rich insights into the interplay of cultural heritage, environmental preservation, community engagement, and local economic development. Golpahari Mandir, located on a hill, has magnificent beauty and is surrounded by diverse flora and fauna. It has not only a sacred significance but also a very diverse ecological and cultural significance that remains untouched in terms of its eco-tourism potential. The findings highlight that it offers the potential for sustainable ecotourism and entrepreneurship along with its cultural and ecological value.

Through surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and observations in this project, several key themes were identified for this site. Primarily is the role of ecotourism is as a holistic approach that integrates the feel of responsible travel with the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Unlike mass tourism, which often prioritizes profit over preservation, eco-tourism emphasizes minimal environmental negative impact, respect for locals and their traditions, and active involvement of local communities in sustainable ecotourism and entrepreneurship, which makes the actively participating local artisans and businessmen into stakeholders.

Secondarily, the most striking aspects of the research were the interaction and engagement of local communities and their view about tourism. The survey results show that the maximum individuals are residents of the place who are aware of the temple's significance. Respondents also suggested many ways to make the site more attractive to eco-tourism. They also suggested many ways to protect nature and create a good tourism environment. This indicates that the local community is an active recipient of tourism. Apart from respondents' ideas, Sustainable solutions such as organizing clean-up drives with the help of the government, guided tours, homestays, and selling eco-friendly products also help to attract tourists.

Environmental conservation was another critical area of focus. As such, the site is relatively untouched compared to urban spaces, so there is no problem regarding deforestation and migration of flora and fauna. Here, use of plastic is the main problem because most people, due to a lack of awareness, throw plastic wrappers of pooja material on the ground instead of the dustbin. Mainly, these ventures must align with eco-friendly practices to maintain the integrity of the site and fulfil the principles of sustainable tourism.

Through this survey, one thing becomes very clear that there is a need for a well-organized system to guide ecotourism development. It is not just about encouraging tourism, but also about sustainably doing tourism to acquire more benefits for the environment, nature, locals, flora, and fauna. Development of the site in such a way as to make it a perfect tourism place with ecological sustainability is not so easy. To make this real, two-sided efforts need to be made. It is only possible when the government and locals work together. Local authorities should take the lead in designing and organizing sustainable programmes. Specific rules or guidelines should be established, which will be enforced by the government.

Overall, the study underscores that sustainable ecotourism at Golpahari is achievable when there is a balanced approach that considers local realities, leverages community strengths, and fosters collaboration between government and local residents. This research is not only a concept but also an integrated model that acts as a roadmap for similar regions facing comparable challenges, providing direction for sustainable economic growth and long-term environmental stewardship.

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DECODING THE SINDHU SCRIPT- PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

DISHA

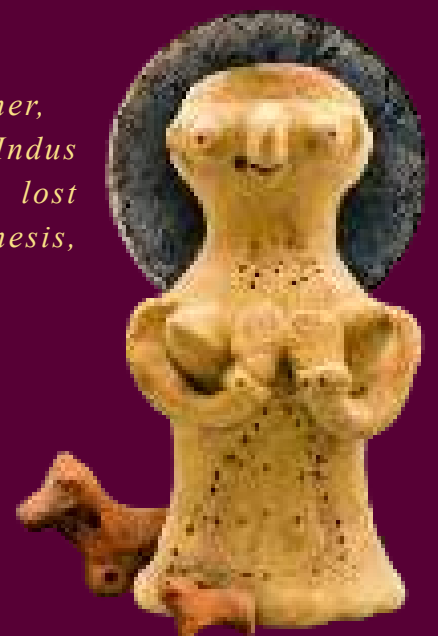


ABSTRACT

Decoding Sindhu script would not just unfold the past of the Sindhu Saraswati Civilization but would also unravel various puzzles, one being the possibility of continuation of Harappan and Vedic period. Today, we are clueless but the way similarities between Vedic Sanskrit and Avestan language have helped trace cultural connections between two groups of people, Sindhu script holds mysteries that may let us rewrite the past from a fresh perspective and who knows if it may fit within the studies of comparative philology. Lack of bilinguals and brevity of inscriptions are not the only challenges, the inscribed objects displaced from their locations, difficulty in analysing signs due to various handwritings, possibility of more than one language and lack of script likely inscribed on perishable materials are some of the factors that have maintained the enigma behind the Sindhu Script. Absence of script in burials defy the dominant idea of use of writing for outlining ownership. Thus, comprehending the meanings of numerous signs and thousands of inscriptions collectively is infeasible, making it crucial to categorize the script by material and location to better grasp the potential purpose and significance of a specific set of writings. One of the

aspects explored under the subject is 'The collapse of Indus-Script thesis' (Steve Farmer, Richard Sproat and Michael Witzel) but the expanse of inscribed Harappan objects found across the distant lands, complicated materials and technologies involved, identified logo syllabic and ideographic character, sequential dependency patterns (Markov model), possible similarities with Proto-Elamite script and use of abstract signs demonstrates the intellectual heights of Harappans. This paper challenges the hypothesis that 'Harappans lacked a true script' and analyses past explorations to understand the enigma behind and nature of Sindhu script that would show us the way ahead.

Keywords: Decipher, the collapse of Indus script thesis, lost manuscript thesis, linguistics.

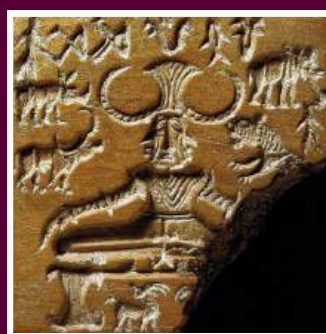


Sindhu Saraswati Civilisation or as it is more generally referred to in the books as Indus valley civilisation or Harappan civilisation is one the first urban cultures the world has ever known which flourished along the two major river systems of Sindhu or Indus and Saraswati. Sindhu culture is an example of one of the greatest feats of cognitive intellectual humans have ever achieved not just in terms of its extraordinary city planning and drainage system unimaginable at that time but the extensive trade networks, Harappans sculptures, and other forms of craftsmanship also surprises us. It is compatible with the other contemporary existing urban cultures (Mesopotamian, Chinese and Egyptian civilisations) in all aspects. But, unlike the other three, we are unable to trace the absolute past of the Harappan civilisation because we haven't been able to successfully decipher its script. Finding the meaning of whatever is written or inscribed is not just a concern of linguistic discipline but also forms a major factor in understanding the social, political, economical and cultural lives of the people. The inability to read the script has left significant gaps in our understanding of our past and therefore we haven't been able to solve some of the major mysteries underlining the Sindhu Saraswati Civilisation and its possible connections with the Aryans. The major question that arises is why we are unable to decode the script and why after multiple scholarly attempts in nearly all possible directions, the enigma behind the script has remained. Among the explorations on this topic, one theory came which tried to establish that Sindhu script was not even a true script. This paper aims to explore some of the difficulties faced in the context of decipherment of Sindhu script.

As stated earlier, recently a theory tried to claim that Sindhu script was not even a true script but mere collection of non-linguistic symbols. Brevity of inscriptions has been a common argument by few scholars who reject the Sindhu being a true script. Obviously, this has been a major hurdle that we face while decoding the Sindhu script but does it reflect that it was not a true script? In "The collapse of Indus script thesis: the myth of a literate Harappan

civilisation", Farmer, Sproat and Witzel have highlighted this fact in support of their thesis. They write:

"All Indus inscriptions on every medium share one striking feature: extreme brevity. The longest on one surface has 17 symbols; less than 1/100 carry as many as 10. Many Indus inscriptions — if 'inscription' is really the appropriate term — contain only one or two symbols; the average length of the 2,905 objects carrying Indus symbols cataloged in Mahadevan's standard concordance is 4.6 signs long."



They further write: "The absence of long Indus inscriptions on any medium is unparalleled in any known literate civilization represented by even a small fraction of the number of inscriptions in the Indus corpus"

They have tried to establish their argument by comparing the Sindhu script with the linear elamite inscriptions, which belong to "Harappans' closest literate neighbours".

"Only 21 (or possibly 22) Linear Elamite inscriptions are known today; most of them are longer than the longest of the known 4-5,000 Indus inscriptions. Despite their small numbers, Linear Elamite texts of significant length show up on many objects on which we expect such texts from literate civilizations: on sculptures, votive boulders, stairways, and baked-clay cones, disks, and tablets. One exquisitely rendered silver vase carries a single line of Linear Elamite that by itself is 2 1/2 times longer than any known Indus inscription."

Lack of available inscriptions is a cause of concern but not something to surprise upon and this somehow takes us to the conclusion that only few literary evidences were produced by Harappans.

Lack of long form inscriptions might be due to the fact that they were actually composed of perishable materials. And the fact that the precise chronology of the Sindhu Saraswati Civilisation still remains a subject of scholarly debate opens up ample possibility that the script might have been written long ago on perishable stuff which could not survive such a long time span. The same also justifies why no 'literate paraphernalia' like ink, pots, pens, stylus etc are found from the Sindhu region.

This has also been highlighted by John Marshall in his works, "Of clay tablets, let it be added, such as were ordinarily used in Mesopotamia for letters and other lengthy documents, no trace has been found in the Indus Valley, and we must infer that, in place of clay, the Indus scribes employed less durable materials, such as birch bark, palm leaves, parchment, wood, or cotton cloth, any of which would naturally have perished in the course of the ages." Hunter has also concluded the same, "Perhaps they utilised skins".

The lost script thesis has been counter argued on many bases that are worth highlighting in order to truly understand the scholarly analysis on the script decipherment. Farmer, Sproat and Witzel have highlighted the general model of the evolution of manuscript tradition and compared it with the parallels found from contemporary civilisations to find the problems in the lost manuscript thesis. They write "Findings of markers like these have confirmed the existence of manuscript traditions in a number of civilizations in which not a trace of perishable manuscripts have survived". Here I believe that two civilisations that flourished due to different geographical conditions might evolve in such a way that they tend to possess different ways to express their intellectual capabilities. According to me, the paucity of perishable material like birch or palm leaves in the Sindhu Saraswati region could have been the reason why Harappans were more reliable. The physiography and climate might have similarly been responsible for that fact that the desert preserved the papyrus and mesopotamian clay tablets survived but the palm leaf manuscripts of Sindhu

Therefore, it seems less likely that Sindhu script remained isolated to any language existing today. It is also possible that such kinds of bilingual records might have existed or may be found in further explorations. We should not forget that not even Mohenjo-Daro (one of the major and most important towns of the civilisation) has been extensively explored throughout, let alone other areas.

Farmer's argument when he says that the script "contain too many rare signs — between 25 to 50 per cent of the around 400–600 different signs are attested only once" has been counter argued by Asko Parpola in his works, "The Chinese writing system has a very large number of signs that are rarely used in newspapers. All ancient scripts, but especially the logo-syllabic ones, had their rare signs"

Even Farmer, Sproat and Witzel left the argument open ended when they say, "If it had been, it would be the only known literate society, ancient or modern, anywhere in the world that did not leave behind long texts somewhere on durable materials."

The structural complications of the script makes it enigmatic in a way that it becomes difficult to decode it. Though there are technicalities in every script structure, it has been observed with in-depth analysis that Indus script was much more systematised than any other contemporary Script. "the features that distinguish this Indus writing, the most striking perhaps are the extent and variety of its characters and the ingenuity displayed, on the one hand, in modifying them by the addition of accents, strokes, or other simple expedients ; on the other, in combining one sign with another in the form of conjuncts, as is so frequently done in later Indian scripts. Such modifications and combinations are not unknown, Mr. Smith points out, in other scripts of this period ; but nowhere else are they employed so systematically or so widely." (Marshall, pp.40)

Another factor that has maintained the enigma behind the Sindhu script is the possibility that it may contain more than one language or dialect

Seeing the vast area of the Sindhu Saraswati Civilisation and the long distance trade channels, it will not be surprising to say that it could have had a diverse population comprising traders coming from distant lands and other people who later on established themselves in this region. Even today, there are many languages spoken in this region. So, it is not similarly surprising that this diversity would have been reflected in the inscriptions which may contain one dominant language spoken by the elite but there are high chances that names of other people or their dialects might also have become a part of the inscriptions. Additionally, who knows what language Sindhu Seals represent, especially after seeing Ashokan edicts speak not elite but common language.

Then there are certain technical problems with the inscriptions. For instance - certain objects are imperfectly represented. This has given rise to more complicated issues like the incapability of identifying the exact number of signs has been yet another reason why we are still struggling with the script. Various scholars have tried to identify the different numbers of signs and have reached different conclusions rather than coming to a unanimous opinion. About the Sign manual by Gadd and Smith in MIC, volume. 3 CXIX-CXXIX, Marshall has written,

"The number of signs lifted in Messrs. Smith and Gadd's Manual is 396, but among these it may be that some have been differentiated which are really identical, the apparent differences between them being merely accidental, while others again (and there are many such) may be variants of this or that sign modified for purposes at which we can only guess. On the other hand, it is possible that some signs have not been differentiated which ought to have been ; and we may be sure, too, that many more signs will be found to swell the existing list before it is complete" (p. 40)

Mahadevan arrived at a list of 417 independent signs in his concordance (Mahadevan 1977). Parpola has estimated a slightly shorter list of 386 signs (Parpola 1994) while Wells has more recently proposed a list of 694 signs (Wells 2015). The inability of reaching

out a common consensus about the total number of signs in the Sindhu Script has made it difficult to proceed in the decipherment journey.

In attempting to understand the decipherment journey, I felt that the Sindhu script comprises such an intricate system of signs and symbols that it is difficult to proceed with the approach of studying it in a coherent and integrated manner and not by categorising it systematically. The general conception that the script was primarily used for the purpose of depicting the ownership has already been denied based on the fact that no inscribed objects have been found in any burials. This becomes more reliable when we study individual research in a more precise and zoomed in way. For example- Rajesh P.N. Rao in one of his articles has tried to explore the possible uses of scripts found on a specific type of objects i.e the tiny steatite tablets discovered in Harappan by Meadow and Kenoyer. Based on symbolic analysis, archaeological evidence (discarded seals might suggest obsolete currency) and parallels of such kinds of tablets found in other civilisations, he concluded that these tablets had been playing an important role in the economic administration, specifically in rationing labour and recording goods. This method is important to understand as it clearly suggests that there is a need to categorically study the inscription based on the types of objects they are found because various kinds of objects made of different different types of materials might have served their own unique purpose

"The insights from these miniature tablets and the fact that very similar inscriptions are found on stamp seals point to the potentially provocative conclusion that rather than containing names of owners as traditionally believed, a vast majority of Indus seals may have been used to generate tokens, tablets, and sealings for repetitive economic transactions such as rations and exchange of canonical amounts of goods, grains, animals, and labor in a barter-based economy."

As the paper already mentioned that there are likely possible connections of Sindhu script with other languages. The idea that whether Sindhu script is related to Brahmi script or Dravidian script is very important in academic context not just to facilitate the decoding but due to the fact that it forms a part of larger debate between two narratives that we already know. Though Mahadevan has written "So complete is the racial fusion, that the terms 'Aryan' and 'Dravidian' can now be used legitimately only in a linguistic context", the idea does not restrict itself purely to linguistics but goes on to extend into the ongoing historical debate on the Aryan question. And that is the reason why the decipherment of the script will help us uncover the relations that existed between Harappans and Aryans. It may help us revisit the Aryan immigration theory with a totally new perspective. Therefore, we need to be careful with Sindhu script with the other two.



Scholars like Mahadevan and Parpola have tried to find the possible connections of Sindhu Script with the Dravidian one.

Parpola started with exploring connections of Sindhu script with the existing language families of India European, Indo Iranian, Sino Tibetan and Austro Asiatic and reached out the conclusion that neither of them are likely to have descended from the Harappan language. 'The only remaining alternative among the well - known potential linguistic relatives of the

Harappan language is the Dravid language family', writes Parpola.

The existence of Dravidian language Brahui in the North West subcontinent, the extent to which Dravidian languages are spoken today (both geographically and demographically), presence of identified loanwords from Dravidian languages in the Indo Aryan texts composed in northwest, the presence of retroflex consonants over the region of Sindhu and Dravida and most importantly the structural similarities between the two have been major arguments by the Finnish Indologist in favour of his theory that 'Harappans probably spoke a Dravidian language'. (pp. 13, 14)

On the other hand some scholars have tried to establish their narrative that says that there are fair possibilities that a parallel can be found between the Sindhu inscriptions and The Rigved. Searching for the same can also help us navigate the Aryan question from a totally different and new perspective. Moreover, we can't only consider these two opinions, of comparing Sindhu script with Brahmi and Dravidian inscriptions, when it comes to finding linguistic parallels to Sindhu script as we are still exploring the relations between the former two mentioned scripts. Theories like 'Dravidian origin of Brahmi' make us think about the extent of complexities that we face while dealing with the past that it is possible that two families of languages which are totally different in their technicalities might have something in common. Prominent scholars like Edward Thomas and others who believe in this view say that Brahmi script is basically a Dravidian script. According to them, like other elements of civilization and culture, Aryans learnt this script from them, but the oldest specimens of Brahmi are available in North India, which was the abode of Aryans. Not only this, it is not possible to develop a complete and scientific script from an entirely differently structured script like Dravidian. That's why Rajbali Pandey argued against it arguing that if Brahmi had been invented from Dravidian script, its material would have been found in South India too. But some scholars believe in the former argument which suggests that Dravidians lived in

North India and were the originators of high urban cultures like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappan.

These arguments have taken us nowhere till now because of the mysteries still embedded in the Sindhu script. We would not be able to trace the true itihaas of Sindhu Saraswati Civilization until and unless we decode the script enshrined on its inscriptions and other material. Scholarly work that has been done on the same till date shows that it is clearly not a cake walk to decipher this ancient script. No conclusion has been reached till now but we are proceeding in a way that is still finding new possibilities with every single research. Despite the fact that we have failed to read whatever is written, we can be sure about the fact that it was an intellectually coded true script which shows the cognitive abilities of the Harappans and not merely a collection of non linguistic symbols. The paper tried to throw light on some of the main issues that we are facing while deciphering the script, in short the factors that have maintained the enigma behind the symbols. Some of the past explorations have been highlighted that will show us the way ahead in this journey of Decoding the 'Sindhu Script'.



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VISUALIZING ANCIENT INDIAN MATHEMATICS THROUGH MANUSCRIPTS, INSCRIPTIONS, AND SEALS

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Indian mathematics, notable for its significant advancements in arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, has typically been examined through written works such as the Śulba Sūtras, Āryabhaṭīya, and the Bakhshali Manuscript. Nevertheless, visual elements found in manuscripts, decorative motifs, and seals offer an additional perspective for comprehending the dissemination and application of mathematical knowledge in pre-modern India. This paper investigates the relationship between mathematics and visual culture by scrutinizing mathematical illustrations, geometric patterns, and numerical engravings in epigraphic documents and illustrated manuscripts.

The research focuses on palm-leaf and birch-bark manuscripts that feature marginal notes and geometric drawings, providing insight into the teaching methods of mathematics in ancient and early medieval India. The geometric patterns found in temple sculptures, yantras, and textiles are examined to uncover how mathematical ideas such as symmetry, fractals, and proportions were represented in artistic practices. Furthermore, seals and writings, including those from the Harappan civilization and subsequent Gupta-era documents, are scrutinized for numerical representations and mathematical symbolism.

This paper employs an interdisciplinary approach that merges historical, archaeological, and mathematical viewpoints to contend that visual evidence enhances our comprehension of ancient Indian mathematical concepts. The results indicate that mathematics was not merely an abstract discipline but also a hands-on and aesthetic endeavor, intricately intertwined with material culture. This research adds to a wider historiographical reevaluation of mathematical heritage, highlighting the significance of visualization in the transmission of knowledge. Manuscripts serve as vessels of culture and establish a connection between past and present. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that these manuscripts are properly preserved for the advantage of future generations. This paper will try to find out the mathematical importance in making Yajñavedī, motifs, seals, temples and much more. It will try to explore the carvings of mathematical figures on the rock and wood architectural buildings in Ancient and Early Medieval India

KEYWORDS :- *Mathematics, Visual cultures, Manuscripts, Carvings, Motifs, Geometry.*

INTRODUCTION

Mathematics in ancient India was a highly developed field, closely linked with religious practices, astronomy, and architectural designs. The significant contributions made by Indian mathematicians—from algebra to trigonometric calculations—are well recorded in works such as Aryabhata's *Aryabhatiya* (499 CE), Brahmagupta's *Brahmasphutasiddhanta* (628 CE), and Bhaskara II's *Lilavati* (12th century CE). Nevertheless, these texts are merely a fraction of India's mathematical legacy. The representation of mathematical concepts in manuscripts, temple designs, and artifacts provides an equally important but frequently ignored viewpoint.

Mathematics in ancient India extended beyond mere theoretical calculations; it was rooted in tangible cultural elements. The geometric accuracy seen in Hindu and Jain temples, the patterns within illustrated manuscripts, and the numerical uniformity

in Indus Valley trade objects all suggest that mathematics was both visual and practical. The incorporation of sacred diagrams (yantras), symmetrical designs of temples, and standardized weights used in trade indicates that mathematical understanding encompassed both theory and application.

This paper investigates the visual components of Indian mathematics through three main perspectives:

Manuscripts: Analyzing illustrated documents that showcase numerical grids, geometric constructions, and combinatorial designs.

Temple motifs and architecture: Studying fractal designs, recursive symmetry, and the mathematical organization of Hindu and Jain temples.

Indus Valley seals and urban planning: Exploring the occurrence of mathematical symbols, standardized measurements, and proportional city designs.

By methodically examining these visual representations, this research contends that ancient Indian mathematics was an active practice, reflected in both intellectual traditions and material culture. This interdisciplinary framework challenges traditional narratives that favor textual sources over visual evidence and offers new perspectives on the historiography of Indian mathematics.

1. Mathematical Symbolism in Indus Valley Seals, Designs and Motifs.

The Indus Valley Civilization (c. 2600–1900 BCE) represents one of the earliest documented urban cultures globally, and its artifacts, especially seals and inscriptions, offer significant insights into primitive mathematical understanding. The occurrence of repeated numerical symbols, geometric designs, and a standardization of weights and measures indicates that mathematical concepts were utilized in trade, governance, and architectural practices.

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1.1 Standardized Weights and Measurement Systems.

The people of the Indus Valley developed an elaborate system of standardized weights and measures, demonstrating their advanced understanding of proportions, ratios, and numerical consistency. Excavations at Harappa, Lothal, and Mohenjo-Daro have revealed uniform cubic stone weights that are systematically arranged in both binary and decimal sequences. The consistency of these weights across various Indus sites indicates an early instance of metrological standardization.



Fig.1, Source: National Museum

Key mathematical observations from the weights of the Indus Valley:

1. The smallest weight units are equivalent to 1.3 grams and form a binary progression (1.3, 2.6, 5.2, etc.). These weights adhere to the conventional Harappan binary weight system that was utilized across all the settlements



Fig.2, Source: Harappa.com

2. The discovery of uniform scales and marked rulers in Mohenjodaro suggests knowledge of linear measurements and proportional calculations. It is a ruler crafted from shell, found fractured at both ends, in Room 46, Block 18, within the region of the archaeological site identified as the DK area. The flat

surface features nine distinct dividing lines and an incised circle. Several lines that appear to be scratches cross over the dividing lines. Found at locations such as Mohenjo-daro and Lothal, these rulers feature consistently spaced markings, with divisions as fine as 1.32 inches (about 3.4 centimeters). Researchers have regarded this as an indication of a decimal-based measurement system. For example, the scale discovered at Lothal shows precise calibration, suggesting it was used for standardizing brick sizes and possibly assisting in construction projects. The consistency of bricks, with proportions of 1:2:4, indicates adherence to certain modular standards, further highlighting the significance of these tools.



Fig.3, Indus Valley Ruler; Source: National Museum

The standardization of weights implies that merchants in the Indus Valley performed precise calculations for taxation, trade, and construction, providing evidence of practical applied mathematics well before its formal recognition in subsequent Indian texts.

1.2 Urban Planning: Geometry in City Layouts.

One of the remarkable mathematical feats of the Indus Valley Civilization was its meticulously designed urban layout, showcasing a grasp of spatial geometry, symmetry, and grid-based configuration. Cities like Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Dholavira, and Lothal display rectangular street patterns, consistent housing blocks, and exact drainage systems, all indicative of sophisticated geometric planning. “Period I at Rehman Dheri in the Gomul valley is early Harappan and its earliest levels are dated c. 3380–3040 BCE. The settlement was over 20 ha in size. Aerial photographs showed a planned, rectangular settlement with a regular grid of streets and houses, surrounded by a massive wall that belonged to a later phase, contemporary with the mature Harappan.” (Upinder Singh, 142-143).

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Fig.4, Rehman Dheri (Gomal Valley of Pakistan)

In contrast to contemporary mathematical literature, which depends largely on symbolic notation, ancient Indian writings frequently used diagrams, grids, and geometric illustrations to depict mathematical concepts.

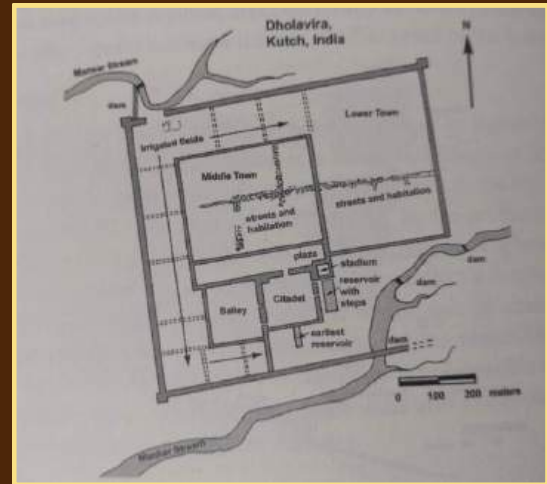


Fig.5, Layout of Dholavira, Kutch, India

Archaeological research indicates that:

- Streets were oriented along cardinal directions (north-south and east-west axes), signifying an understanding of astronomical alignment.
- Buildings adhered to standardized proportions, with typical dimensions implying pre-established modular ratios.
- Drainage systems utilized gradient calculations, demonstrating knowledge of fluid mechanics and slope geometry.

Dholavira, a significant city of the Indus, boasts a three-tier urban structure, where the citadel, middle town, and lower town are defined by precise geometric divisions. The Great Bath of Mohenjo-Daro, characterized by its symmetrical brickwork and waterproofing methods, underscores practical applications of area measurement and volumetric calculations. These discoveries suggest that the engineers of the Indus Valley applied mathematical concepts in real-world scenarios, facilitating effective city designs, water management, and structural integrity. This predates the urban planning principles observed in later Greek and Roman cities, highlighting the advanced nature of Indian proto-mathematics

2. The Role of Manuscripts and Inscriptions in Mathematical Pedagogy.

Ancient Indian mathematical wisdom was safeguarded and shared mainly through manuscripts created on palm leaves, birch bark, and copper plates. These texts were vital in education, allowing scholars and learners to comprehend abstract numerical ideas.

2.1 The Sulbasutras: Geometric Construction through Visual Representation.

The Sulbasutras (c. 800–200 BCE) rank among the earliest Indian documents that systematically utilize visual methods for teaching mathematics. These writings were created for building fire altars (yajnas) and include elaborate geometric techniques for forming accurate squares, rectangles, and circles.

A particularly notable finding in the Sulbasutras is the estimation of the square root of two ($\sqrt{2}$), which is crucial for constructing right-angled altars. The text outlines a geometric procedure to convert a rectangle into a corresponding square, foreshadowing algebraic concepts of equivalence. Furthermore, the Pythagorean theorem is explicitly mentioned in these works well before the time of Pythagoras, reflecting a profound comprehension of geometric connections.

Images in subsequent manuscript versions of the Sulbasutras illustrate detailed, stepwise constructions of these geometric shapes, indicating that mathematical understanding was actively visualized and applied in practical situations. These manuscripts fostered an intuitive grasp of geometry, enhancing learning through visual representation instead of relying solely on abstract symbols.

"Some of the ritual practice texts explained how the different types or goals of sacrifices were associated with different sizes and shapes of fire altars, which were to be constructed from baked bricks of prescribed numbers and dimensions. The footprints for the altars were laid out on leveled ground by manipulating cords of various lengths attached to stakes. The manuals described the required manipulations in terse, cryptic phrases—usually prose, although sometimes including verses—called *sūtras* (literally "string" or "rule, instruction"). The measuring-cords, called *'sulba* or *'sulva*, gave their name to this set of texts, the *Sulba-sūtras*, or "Rules of the cord."¹

¹(Kim Plofker, *Mathematics in India*, 17)

From as early as the Baudhāyana-*sulba-sūtra*, techniques are outlined for forming right-angled corners of a square or rectangle, creating a square with an area equal to the sum or difference of two specified squares, and transforming a square while maintaining its area into a rectangle (or the opposite), a trapezium, triangle, rhombus, or a circle (or vice versa). In this context, it is clearly acknowledged that the square built on the diagonal of a given square holds twice the area of the original; and more broadly, that the squares of the width and length of any rectangle combine to equal the square of its diagonal, known as the Pythagorean theorem. Fig. Represents the shapes described in the *sulbasūtras* for making fire altar's or Yajñavedī.

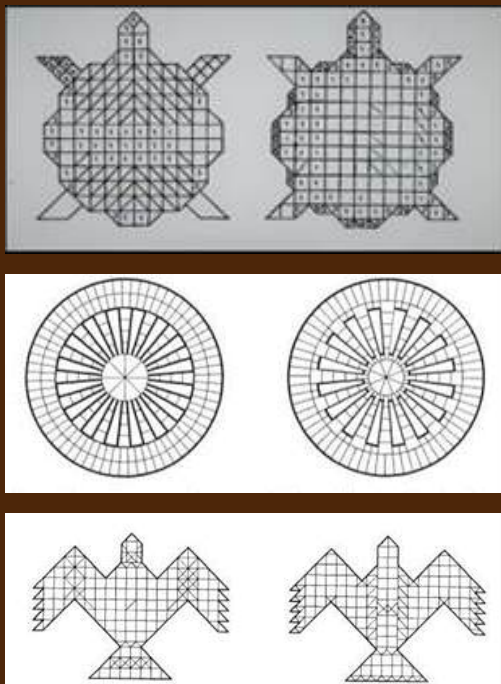


Fig.6, S. N. Sen and A. K. Bag, *The Sulbasūtras*, Indian National Science academy, New Delhi, 1983.

¹The first layer of a Vedic sacrificial altar in the shape of a falcon. The wings are each made from 60 bricks of type a, and the body from 46 of type b, 6 of type c, and 24 of type d. (After Thibaut 1875)



Fig.7, Falcon-shaped *vedī* excavated from Purola, Uttarkashi; likely belonging to the Kuninda period (150 BCE - 250 CE).

"Figure, illustrates how this proposition was applied in the construction of altars. It shows a drawing of the base of the Mahavedī (Great Altar) for the Soma ritual (at which an intoxicating drink called soma was offered as a sacrifice to the gods). Its base had to be constructed to precise dimensions if the sacrifice was to bear fruit. It had to be an isosceles trapezium like ABCD, with AD and BC being 24 and 30 padas (literally feet). The altitude of the trapezium (i.e., the distance between the midpoints X and Y of AD and BC) had to be precisely 36 padas. The instructions given for the construction of this altar in Apastamba *Sulbasūtra*."

-Joseph, George Gheverghese (*The Crest of the Peacock*)

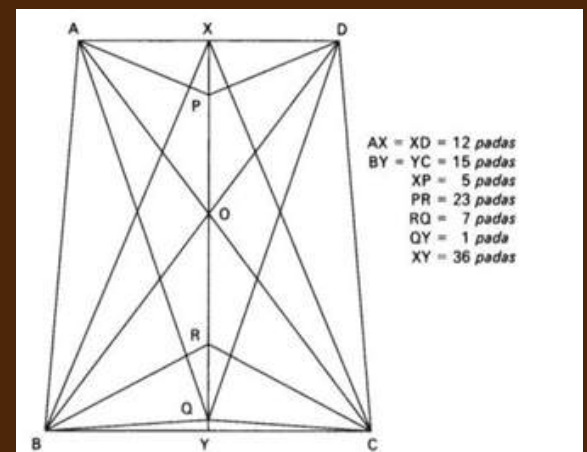


Fig.8, The layout of the Mahavedī (Great Altar)

In present time as well, we can see several types of Hawan Kund or Yajñavedī with different shapes and layouts. Kamal pushpa designs, square, rectangular and circular fire altar's are used in present day India as well. Which shows the continuity of design's in making fire altar's from vedic to modern age and give support to the argument about the relevance of Ancient Indian scriptures in modern day as well.



Fig.9, Modern day fire altar's.

2.2 Visual depictions and the Development of Indian Numerals in inscriptions and Manuscripts

If we investigate and analyze, we will observe that even during the period of the Indus Valley civilization, there are symbols on seals or motifs that may represent numbers, although their script remains undeciphered, making it challenging to draw conclusions. Subsequently, we also discover numerical references during the Rigvedic era, but here too, we find numbers presented alongside words, and instances of specific symbols meant to indicate numerical values are quite rare. For example, in one instance in Rigveda, the number eight is incorporated within the word itself, quotation from the rigveda itself(x. 62.7), which refers to the writing of the number eight is: Sahasram me dadato aṣṭakarnyah, meaning "gave me a thousand cows on whose ears the number eight was written."

Bibhutibhusan Datta says "It is generally held that numerical symbols were invented after writing had been in use for some time, and that in the early stages the numbers were written out in full in words. This seems to be true for the bigger units, but the signs for the smaller units are as old as writing itself."

So that's why we can say that the numerical system was known to the people of different ages and it shows the connectivity or continuity from Indus valley to Rig Vedic to later on ages. Now let's try to understand the development of early Indian numerals through Visual Cultures or their development of numerical symbols through ages. For this we will take the Naneghat inscription, Nasik Inscriptions, Bakhshali Manuscript and Gwalior Inscriptions. These inscriptions and Manuscripts contain the visual depictions of Indian numerals and it also shows the continuity among the different periods about the mathematical consciousness

2.2.1 The Naneghat inscriptions play a significant role in the examination of numeral history.

Despite being damaged, the inscriptions reference numerals in at least 30 instances. They showcase some of the earliest known numeration symbols for "2, 4, 6, 7, and 9," which bear a resemblance to contemporary numerals, especially the modern Nāgarī script. "These numerals inscribed on the cave walls

are numerals representing the signs for 10 and 7(fig.), which date back to 150 BC Another version of the Brahmi numerals is found at Nasik, near present-day Bombay (now Mumbai), from around 100 BC both versions resemble each other." (Joseph, George Gheverghese).



Fig.10, Non-place-value numerals 10 and 7 in a Buddhist cave inscription.



Fig.11, Naneghat Inscription, Maharashtra, Brahmi Script

TABLE SHOWING THE PROGRESS OF NUMBER FORMS IN INDIA																			
NUMERALS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
* Aśoka	I	II	III	IIII															
* Śaka	I	II	III	IX	IIIX	XX				7 3				733333				41 71	
* Aśoka	I	II		+	6									6					4
* Nāgarī (Naneghat)	=	=	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕									
* Nasik	=	=	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕									
* Ksatrapa	=	=	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕									
* Kuṣāna	=	=	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕									
* Gupta	=	=	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕									

Fig.12, Table showing the numerals deciphered from Naneghat.

2.2.2 Bakhshālī Manuscript was the earliest independent writings on ganita, in which the Depiction of Symbol Zero is found. It is written on the Birch bark in Sharda script around 4th Century A.D. The Bakhshālī Manuscript stands out as one

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Kharosthi				×	IX	X	X	XX	?	
Brahmi	—	=	≡	𑀓	𑀔	𑀕	𑀖	𑀗	𑀘	𑀙
Gwalior	𑀧	𑀨	𑀩	𑀪	𑀫	𑀬	𑀭	𑀮	𑀯	𑀰

Fig.16, Table showing three types of Indian numerals in chronological order.

Note: The Kharosthi numeral for 9 is not known for certain

3. The Usage of Mathematical ideas in Temple building in early Medieval India.

The geometric and numerical patterns found in Indian temple architecture, especially the Vastu-Purusha-Mandala and the fractal-inspired designs of gopurams, showcase a deep understanding of recursive mathematics. The architectural advancements seen at Jantar Mantar demonstrate the use of trigonometry and observational astronomy in grand structures. These developments indicate that mathematical visualization transcended written documents and manifested in substantial, physical constructions, illustrating that Indian mathematicians cultivated a remarkably advanced visual and spatial mathematical tradition.

The Vastu-Purusha-Mandala is a squared arrangement, usually segmented into 64 (8×8) or 81 (9×9) squares, representing a cosmic structure. Each square denotes a deity, while the central area (Brahmasthan) is often kept vacant or houses the main sanctum of the temple (garbhagriha). This arrangement showcases the early application of mathematical principles akin to Cartesian coordinates, ensuring proportional design, alignment, and energetic flow within sacred spaces. The Shilpa Shastras, ancient Indian texts on architecture, highlight the importance of geometric accuracy in the design of temples.

The standard text Mayamata mentions- "Only if the temple is constructed correctly according to a mathematical system can it be expected to function in harmony with the universe. Only if the measurement of the temple is in every way perfect, there will be perfection in the universe as well."

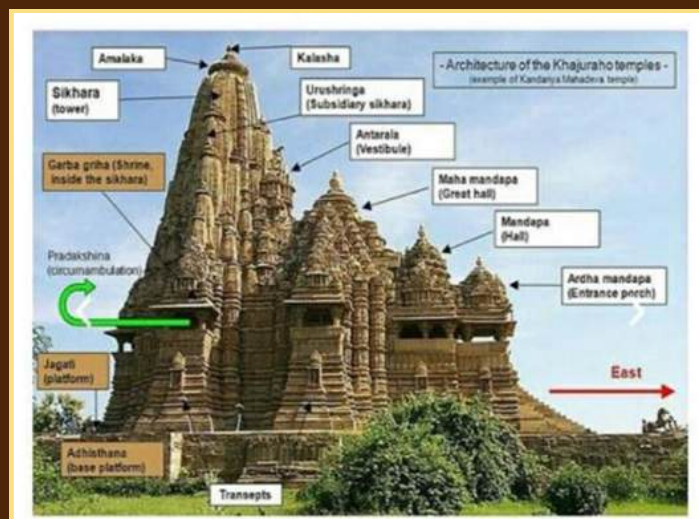


Fig.17, The Architecture of the Khajuraho Temples.

3.1 Vinyasasutra:- Layout and Orientation.

In Sanskrit, 'Vinyaasa' refers to orientation, while 'sutra' denotes a thread, line, or axis. This concept is associated with the layout and orientation of temple designs. The foundation for the evolution of a temple plan is the Vastupurushamandala. The Vinyasasutra is applied following the initial development of the temple design. In the process of establishing the axis and orientation of the temple and its surrounding area, ancient architects adhered to the methods outlined in Hindu scriptures such as Vastushashtra and Manasara. Nevertheless, all the plans employed geometries that exhibit fractal characteristics

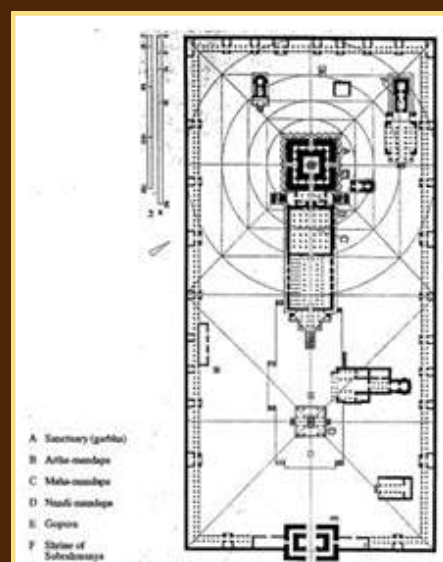


Fig.18, Plan of The Brihadeshwara Temple, Tanjore. A Volwahsen, Living Architecture, p 87.

3.2 Temple Architecture: An epitome of Sacredness and geometrical Art.

The Hindu temples and their Architecture contains an immense amount of shapes, structures and geometrical calculations. We can see in the figure, the triangle, trapezium, square, rectangles and ashtakamal

designs were used to make the temple elements. The shapes of the temple, the gateways, the mandapa and the carvings on it were perfectly calculated and well placed, as the temple symbolises the sacredness and the cosmic connection.

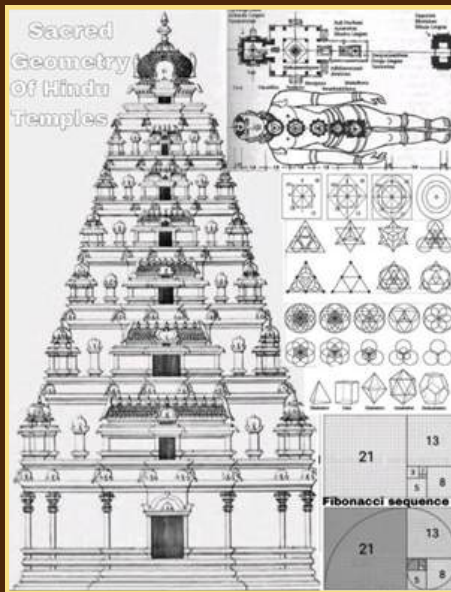


Fig.19, Sacred geometry of Hindu Temples

CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, the representation of ancient Indian mathematics through manuscripts, inscriptions, and seals reveals a complex intellectual heritage that is intricately woven into the cultural, religious, and practical aspects of its era. The concepts of zero and infinity illustrated in manuscripts, along with the geometric accuracy found in architectural carvings and the undeciphered numerical designs on seals, demonstrate a civilization that integrated mathematical theory with practical use. By placing these discoveries within their historical and philosophical contexts, this study highlights the global relevance of ancient Indian mathematics as a connection between empirical knowledge and metaphysical exploration. Safeguarding and further interpreting these rich resources not only honors the creativity of the past but also plays a crucial role in enhancing our understanding of humanity's shared mathematical legacy.

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- Figures, tables, photographs are taken from the websites, books, journals, Field visits and public domains, already mentioned in the references.

SYMBOLISM IN THE INDUS SCRIPT : DEITIES AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

DIVYARAJ SINGH



ABSTRACT

“The Indus Valley Civilization” also referred to as “The Harappan Civilization” named after “Harappa” the first site to be discovered and dated to approximately 2600-1900 BCE has the honour of being one of the world’s 4 earliest urban societies the other three being the Mesopotamian , the Chinese and the Egyptian civilizations . It holds immense importance not only for its architectural achievements but also for its cultural and intellectual history of the Indian subcontinent . The civilization remains enigmatic , largely cause of the undeciphered nature of its script which remains a matter of discussions among historians till date cause the script could provide more details about the social ,cultural ,political and economic life of the people .

Among the most compelling aspects of the script are the recurring motifs and symbols which appear to carry religious and cultural significance . This paper critically examines the potential identification of deities and religious symbols embedded within the iconography of Indus seals and Tablets cause we get a major portion of knowledge from them and also alongside with some other remains . We will also look upon some important motifs such as “The Horned Deity” (also referred to as proto-shiva) , “The Peepal Leaf” , “Shaktism in the seals” , “The Sacred Bull” , “The Unicorn” and “Some other significant seals” which might have served as divine representations of Indus belief systems .

The presence of standard seals bearing ritualistic postures and sacred beings suggests the existence of a priestly class and codified religious structures. This study contributes to an emerging consensus that the Indus civilization, though undeciphered, encoded profound narratives in its visual language. The symbolic language of its script points towards a complex civilization where religion and semiotics were intricately interwoven.

Keywords :- Religion , Culture , Symbolism , Script , Deities , Belief Systems .

INTRODUCTION

The Indus Valley Civilization (or The Harappan civilization), besides witnessing the first cities in the subcontinent, also marks the first use of script and the earliest known use of stone as a medium of sculpting making it one of the most sophisticated and advanced cultures of the world dating way back to almost 5000 years.

These two features, along with Harappan religious beliefs and practices are salient features of the cultural life of the Harappans. Though the Harappan script has not yet been deciphered, the symbols engraved on seals, tablets and other artefacts reveal a recurring repertoire of motifs that appear to carry religious and cultural significance.

There have been many scholarly debates over such a long period of time that whether these images depict deities, clan emblems, cosmological concepts or ritualistic motifs.

However, the study of their symbolism offers a rare window into the spiritual and ideological framework of the Indus people, where the interplay between pictorial and abstract signs may encode divine attributes and myths.

This paper examines the potential representations of deities and sacred symbols within the Indus script, drawing on archaeological evidences, comparative iconography and cross – cultural parallels to explore how religion and symbolism were woven into the fabric of Harappan society.

THE SCRIPT : A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND :-

The discovery of the first Indus seal predates the formal identification of the Indus valley civilization by more than half a century. In 1856, during the construction of the East Indian Railway line near Harappa in Punjab (now in Pakistan), British engineers John and James Brunton unearthed large baked bricks and a small engraved object. This seal later came into the possession of Major Clark and was described by Sir Alexander Cunningham.

Cunningham recorded :

“The most curious object discovered at Harappa is a seal belonging to Major Clark ... The seal is a smooth black stone without polish. On it is engraved very deeply a bull, without hump, looking to the right, with two stars under the neck. Above the bull there is an inscription in six characters, which are quite unknown to me. They are certainly not Indian letters; ... I conclude that the seal is foreign to India.”

This whole description constitutes the earliest scholarly record of what is now termed “The Indus Script”. At the time, the engraved characters were wholly unfamiliar to Cunningham, reflecting the absence of any framework for interpreting the civilizations epigraphy. Cunningham’s account stands as both a historical milestone and an initial though unrecognized, encounter with one of the world’s earliest writing systems and the seal would later on become one of the most recognized symbols of Indus iconography.

“The Harappan Script” is regarded as the earliest form of writing in the Indian subcontinent and most of the writings appear on circumscribed space of seals with the largest Harappan Inscription coming from Dholavira. As it has large-sized letters, it has been considered as a signboard with some even stating it as the first signboard of the world. The script indeed is one of the four most ancient scripts in the world (the other three being the Sumerian cuneiform script, the Egyptian hieroglyphics and the Chinese characters). The Harappan script was prevalent during the period 2600 to 2000/1900 BC. There are about 4000 short inscriptions on seals available to us from excavations and five characters on an average on each seal can be seen.

Researches by Asko Parpola and Iravatham Mahadevan have established that the script was written from right to left .

A logical surmise would be that the language of the Harrapan script was non-sanskritic . Which means that the Harrapan script therefore , has little connection with Brahmi , which is generally considered as the mother of most of the current Indian scripts and which for the first time surfaced in the edicts of Ashoka in 3rd century BC . There is little to prove that the Harrapan script was the earliest form of Brahmi and meant for writing Sanskrit language , in spite of some recent attempts to paint this culture with a Vedic hue .

Romila Thapar states that -:

“ If the script is pictographic or logographic and not alphabetic , it could point to the use of more than one language with the possible languages that have been considered include Proto - Dravidian , Indo - Sumerian , Elamo - Dravidian , Indo - Aryan and Austro-Asiatic.”

Epigraphic and palaeographic studies have shown us that the script consisted both pictographs and ideographs which led the script being labelled as logo-syllabic.

1.WHISPERS OF THE STONE : THE SEALS :-

The Indus Script is found primarily on seals , pottery and copper (like bronze tablets , tools and weapons) while no writing has ever been found on organic materials like papyrus , leaves or bark . Seals were primarily made of a soft stone called steatite while other items such as terracotta , faience and ivory were also used. But no doubt that seals provide us the largest number of inscribed material with Mohenjo-Daro providing the most at 1232 seals .

Seals are important for our research because of the symbolism of figures which they show us.They are typically square to rectangular in shape , 2 to 3 centimetres on side , but larger and smaller examples exist .The analysis of the “micromorphology” of seal cutting (sharp tools like flint , copper-bronze were used) and design led to interesting suggestions by P.Rissman and U.Franke-Vogt who classified the seals into different types based on the unicorn seal

such as the hatched-faced type , collared necked ones etc while also briefing on provincial carving styles . There have been various scholarly debates on what was the purpose of the seals ? Some such as Jhon Marshall, Shereen Ratnagar and Jonathan Mark Kenoyer have been of the opinion that the seals were used by a merchant class for trading purposes with the Mesopotamians and other places .

while Ernest J.H. Mackay states that -:

“It is emerging that the Indus peoples and Mesopotamians used their seals in significantly different ways . The kind of text and seal administration found in Mesopotamia archaic state was not a part of the economic fabric of the Indus . The notion that a seal based administration was used in the Indus political economy also comes into doubt”

This immediately leads us to Asko Parpola who stated that the seals may have been used for religious purposes such as being used as amulets for protection or spiritual authority as seal M-319 (with a hollowed reverse for attachment) and other seals with perforations or wear marks suggesting they were hung around the neck or carried on the body similar to Mesopotamian amulets .

Understanding religious symbolism presented on seals is a key figure of our paper and most importantly for our understanding of the Indus script . Fred R.Barnard said the famous saying that “A picture is worth a thousand words” , so in the same way we will try to understand how even though we still cannot read the Indus script , but how the symbols (or images) imprinted on seals and other objects play a key important role in our understanding of the cultural and religious lifestyle of the people of the Indus and most importantly for currently providing us an alternate way of looking towards what the Indus script though may not directly but indirectly try to tell us through its symbols .

Cause at the end the seals are the only major source from which we get the most characters of the Indus script at a brilliant 60% , and by understanding the figurines of the seals may try to express us more through its visual language .

2. RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM IN SEALS

1.) The Proto-Shiva:

It is said that the best-known part of Marshall's comments on Indus religion is the identification of the seal which was found by MacKay referred most as "Proto-Shiva" also referred as seal number 420, this particular seal is associated majorly with the Hindu deity Shiva as Marshall describes this figure as being in the attitude of a practitioner of yoga, sitting with legs bent double beneath him on a dais, The heels are together, toes down. His arms covered with bangles, are outstretched with hands resting slightly on his knees and thumbs out.

The head is surmounted by a pair of large horns meeting in a high central headdress. These horns are those of a water buffalo. Four wild animals surround the figure: an elephant, tiger, rhinoceros and a water buffalo and even beneath the dais are two quadrupeds: antelopes or ibexes making the seal also known as "The Pashupatinath Seal". Marshall saw three faces on this seal and this was one of the reasons why he saw it as proto-shiva, but it is not entirely clear whether the three faces are there.

Marshall stated -:

"My reasons for this identification are four, In the first place the figure has three faces and that shiva was portrayed with the more usual five faces. Secondly, the head is crowned with the horns with the horns of a bull in the form of a Trishula, and both The Bull and Trishula are emblems of shiva. Thirdly, the figure is in a typical yoga attitude and shiva was and still is regarded as The Mahayogi – the prince of yogis. Fourthly, he is surrounded by animals and shiva is par excellence the "lord of animals" (pasupati)."

The seal's iconography has always invited extensive discussion regarding its religious significance, particularly in the context of early South Asian theism and the possible antecedents of Shaivism. Mackay proposed that the figure could represent a shamanic-priest king functioning as an intermediary between the people of the Indus community and the spiritual world. The prominent horned headdress, recalls horned deities of the ancient near east and proto-elamite cultures where horns signified supernatural authority.

Parpola has argued for a connection between this imagery and a proto-dravidian buffalo-horned

fertility god, later assimilated into Rudra-Shiva, even if the Harappan religion was distinct from Vedic traditions, it likely contributed key mythic and symbolic strands that were later absorbed into the composite figure of Rudra-Shiva but still the deity might have played an important symbol as a fertility deity along with an agrarian one symbolising agricultural cycles where the animals surrounding the deity may represent different ecological zones (forest, river, grassland etc.) symbolising the deity's universal jurisdiction over fertility.

Parpola connects the figure to the Dravidian concept of a male fertility deity akin to the later Murugan or Korravai's consort, suggesting continuity in cultic traditions. He sees the yogic posture as a ritual to ensure rainfall and seasonal fertility possibly linked to early monsoon invoking rites. If we accept Marshall's proto-shiva hypothesis, then this seal shows that Shaivism's roots may reach back to the 3rd millennium BCE, Parpola relates this to the Maleccha (non-vedic) fertility cults which were later absorbed into Vedic religion as Rudra – Shiva. [1] Though until and unless the script is not deciphered, it's difficult to state its original purpose, but till then the figurine helps us to guide what might have been the religious and agricultural system of the society cause even John Marshall saw the figure as the main God of the Harappan's comparable to as a supreme deity. But most likely Proto-Shiva was one of the chief deities, perhaps the male counterpart to a Mother Goddess.



2.) The Holy Fig Tree :-

The Fig Tree has always played an important religious role in dharmic religions throughout centuries and is among the most used motifs in Indus iconography ranging from seals to pottery. Often identified as *Ficus Religiosa* (pipal), this motif has been combined with anthropomorphic figures or sacrificial scenes offers valuable insight into Harappan religious beliefs, agricultural symbolism

and cosmological thought . Parpola interprets the fig tree as a sacred axis , possibly linked to Dravidian linguistic roots . He notes the homophony between Dravidian vatam (fig tree) and vata (north) suggesting a celestial dimension as in Tamil astronomical terminology , vata-min denotes the north star . Thus the fig tree may have been conceived as a cosmic pillar connecting the earthly and heavenly realms .

The Fig Tree has enduring cultural resonance in South Asia as a living embodiment of fertility , longevity and divine presence . In the Harappan context , its placement at the centre of ritual scenes implies it was a cult object in its own right , perhaps a locus for seasonal festivals marking planting or harvest . The combination of human and divine attributes in the tree-and cosmological thought . Parpola interprets the fig tree as a sacred axis , possibly linked to Dravidian linguistic roots . He notes the homophony between Dravidian vatam (fig tree) and vata (north) suggesting a celestial dimension as in Tamil astronomical terminology , vata-min denotes the north star . Thus the fig tree may have been conceived as a cosmic pillar connecting the earthly and heavenly realms .

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3.)Shaktism in Seal's :-

- *A Vaishnavite Seal ? or An Early Form of Shakti Practice ?*



This particular seal has been one of the most amazing one found in Indus from Mohenjo-Daro . Majorly referred to as “The Pleiades Seal” or “Seal 430” , the seal belongs to Mackay’s 1927-31 Mohenjo-Daro excavations , It shows a deity with horned headdress and bangles on both arms standing inside the pipal tree and looking upon a kneeling worshipper , behind him is a hybrid unicorn (human face) and a human head laying beneath the worshipper can be seen and below it are the seven holy figurines . Historians have given various views for this , Parpola correlates the seven women are a personified Krittika (Pleiades) cluster , widely treated as foster-mothers or wet-nurses of a youthful war god Rudra-Skanda .

Similarly Rao treats the row as a Goddess Cluster from a more general Harappan mother-goddess cult , reading the pipal as a fertility/cosmic tree and the line of seven as tutelary protectresses . But Rao also proposed that certain seals represent early Vaishnavite symbolism and that the Pleiades seal might represent Vishnu’s connection with the Saptarishis who play a cosmic role in protecting dharma and that’s why a small minority of writers even stated that the figure inside the pipal is Vishnu himself and that the seven figures actually represent the “Sapta Rishis”(the seven sages) who play a very important role in astronomical perspective to which even Gregory,Parpola and Mahadevan agrees and mentions that some seals with seven symbols may be linked to the seven sages as same with the Pleiades seal as they but its unclear if its truly Vishnu or not . That’s why majority of the historians agree to the fact that the seal represents a

very early form of shakti practise and worship not only in Indus but in the whole Indian sub-continent as it is not at all wrong to state that the statement is true cause of the good number of mother goddess figurines found across the whole civilization taking it back to the founding of The Baghor stone shrine of the Upper Palaeolithic period found in the son river of the Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh dating back to 10,000 BC which many historians have stated it as “Kali Yantra”.



• Dandiya in The Indus ?



The Kalibangan Cylinder Seal (K-65) stands out as one of the most unique artifacts of Harappan glyptic art , Unlike the square seals , this one is cylindrical in shape , resembling Mesopotamian prototypes but bearing distinctly Harappan iconography . Kalibangan itself , located on the banks of the Ghaggar-Hakra River in Rajasthan is renowned for its fire altars and ritual architecture , indicating a strong ritualistic orientation . The discovery of a cylinder seal at this site adds an important dimension to our understanding of Indus religious symbolism , ritual performance and possible cross-cultural influences .

The scene is dynamic unlike the static single-animal seals of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Its processional and rhythmic quality has led many scholars to describe it as a dance scene similar to Dandiya Ras.

Here in the figure we can see a group of people dancing in unison with sticks in their hands just like in Garba and performing it in front of a Goddess most probably Durga in the centre seated on a tiger , though its not clearly visible but shown like that indicating Proto-Navratri festivity during ancient times .

Majority of the historians agree of it symbolising as an early form of Goddess worship and several folklorists argue that the Kalibangan seal may represent the earliest visual reference to Navratri traditions , where dance and worship of the goddess are intertwined . The seal being a shakti symbol is evident from the presence of tiger , people making different hand gestures in the form of worship towards the goddess while some have linked it to as a ritualistic dance for agricultural harvest or rain as well . But whatever may be the reason , the seal quite strengthens our beliefs of a strong shakti devotional practise in the Harappan society and civilization . [1]

3.)The Bull and The Unicorn

Both “The Bull” and “The Unicorn” have been striking and recurring motifs in Indus Seals , you might even had seen it as the logo symbol of The IndusInd Bank as historians do state that the bull might have been a symbol of fertility and wealth , and as we discussed in the beginning that the unicorn seal was the first to be discovered and the most densely found indicate their importance in the Indus society . Marshall emphasized the bull’s characteristics and physical power interpreting it as a fertility emblem .He also noted that the bull often stands before an object often resembling as an altar . He suggests that the Indus people may have practised early forms of bovine sacrifice just like the Vedic Ashvamedha Yagya . Mackay viewed it as a totemic sign or a clan emblem possibly identifying different mercantile groups . But he also stressed that it carried religious overtones , given the reverence for bulls across South Asia and that’s why Parpola placed the bull seal within the broader framework of Indus religion .

He argued that the bull is closely associated with the famous “Proto-Shiva” or “Pashupatinath” Seal . The zebu bull as he suggested prefigures “Nandi” , the sacred bull and mount of Shiva . Thus, the bull seals might represent the earliest evidence of Shaivaite practices in the sub-continent . Mahadevan stated it as a protective guardian and divine symbol while Possehl highlighted it

as a marker of agrarian wealth and power . According to him the seals with bulls were likely carried by elites controlling cattle herds and land linking it with wealth,status and rituals.Ratnagar interpreted them as symbolic markers of capital where ownership of cattle was directly tied to status and authority while Kenoyer laid emphasis on virility and muscularity ties the bull to fertility cults connecting the bull to seasonal rituals of agricultural regeneration , similar to Mesopotamian bull symbolism .Its not at all wrong to state that later Vedic texts placed immense emphasis on the bull as a cosmic principle , often equated with Indra's power and Prajapati's fertility .The epithet "Gaupati"(lord of cattle)resonates with agrarian wealth and social status .

Now if we look upon the Unicorn it has often been seen as the emblem of a ruling or priestly elite in Indus society , but further we get to notice one of its most unique seal in which it is represented as a three headed animal made up of different creatures like the bull and a caprid(goat/antelope) making it look like a composite beast . Marshall suggested that the fusion of animals might indicate a mythical or divine being possibly a protector deity. He refrained from linking it to other Hindu God's but acknowledged the unique nature of the seal and that The Indus people were familiar with the concept of symbolic hybridity . Mahadevan catalogued the seal (M-1186 in his numbering).He emphasized that the script above the animal is not random but belongs to a ritual context , possibly denoting the name of a deity or sacred title . Mahadevan argued that the fusion of animals might symbolize a "composite divinity" cautiously linking it with proto-shiva imagery . Parpola compares it with near eastern composite creatures (like griffins,lamassu etc.)suggesting cultural contact or shared myth-as a marker of agrarian wealth and power . According to him the seals with bulls were likely carried by elites controlling cattle herds and land linking it with wealth,status and rituals.Ratnagar interpreted them as symbolic markers of capital where ownership of cattle was directly tied to status and authority while Kenoyer laid emphasis on virility and muscularity ties the bull to fertility cults connecting the bull to seasonal rituals of agricultural regeneration , similar to Mesopotamian bull

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SOME OTHER SIGNIFICANT SEALS :-

Swastika and Button Seals ?

We know the fact that The Swastika symbol has been of utmost religious importance in Dharmic religions being venerated as a symbol of peace , prosperity and new good beginnings . Even in The Indus Valley excavations a good number of Swastika and button seals were excavated which have caught historians eye's since then . Marshall stated it as an auspicious solar emblem aligning it with later Indian traditions where The Swastika represents the sun's movement and

divine order . He pointed them as religious and ritualistic symbols and not mere ornamentation and similarly Mackay suggested continuity between the Indus symbolism of The Swastika and later dharmic traditions .

Mahadevan and Parpola also associated them with The Sun ,time and cyclical movement interpreting them as elements of cosmological system . Sankalia emphasized the fertility and prosperity symbolism of The Swastika suggesting it is among the oldest auspicious symbols of religion adopted by later dharmic religions , similarly Rao interpreted them as part of fire worship and fertility cults . He argued that their frequent occurrence at Lothal , a major trading port , showed that The Swastika was not only a religious symbol but was also invoked in trade rituals for prosperity .

Now if we look upon The Button seals , historians have noted their unusual form and suggested they might have served a specialized purpose linking to personal or ritual use.

Some even stated that they might have been amulets or talismans serving both protective and identity – related roles . Mahadevan , Parpola and almost majority of the historians saw them as markers of administrative control , perhaps identifying merchants linking to foreign trade , officials or ritual specialists . Their geometric patterns ,they argued might have encoded symbolic meanings linked to The Indus script , while Sankalia stressed their role in expressing social hierarchy and authority used by selected individuals or groups to mark their elevated status.



A SECRET FOLK TALE?

Now the final seal upon which we are going to look at is also among the most interesting ones found till date . In this particular seal we can see a tiger looking upon a human like figure who's in turn upon a tree . Though we find less debates upon this seal like what might have been its original purpose or the meaning behind it . But various Folklorist's have compared the seal to the puranic story of "Lubdhaka" in which he gets trapped in a Bilva Tree while fleeing from a tiger and threw Bilva leaves to keep himself awake and the leaves unknowingly fell on a Shivling that he did not notice . Shiva pleased by this act came then came to rescue him . But archaeologists and historians alike do not agree to this to a larger extend that whether it actually depicts the puranic event mentioned in the story .

Possehl states that :-

"Once again this is a scene with narrative quality that seems to speak to the ideology of the Indus Civilization, but we do not know how to translate it . There is little doubt in my mind that this is the Indus people's speaking to us of their world of their stories about themselves ,which probably aggrandize their lives ,beliefs ,culture , and history , which gave meaning to their way of life . In the old vocabulary of structural functionalism it contributed to Harappan self-esteem and to group solidarity by sharing experiences both real and mythical"



CONCLUSION :-

While complete decipherment of the Indus script still is a mystery among scholars , the brilliant works of Parpola , Mahadevan , Possehl and others have revealed that the figurines on these seals are not just decorative art , but living cultural and religious marks of The Civilization rooted in belief and worship .

From Proto-Shiva to Shakti seals and from Fig Tree , Swastika seals to the iconic Bull and Unicorn , each seal has indicated an symbolic vocabulary rooted in belief and worship . Even though majority of our understanding of The Seals comes from the analytical lenses and opinions of the historians , who also at some point refuted and disagreed upon various points of others , rather than looking upon the undeciphered state of the script as a limitation which though might have provided us more deeper and firmer information , the work discussed by historians can be viewed as a source of intellectual possibility .

Each new thought , each new information and each new discovery of a seal ,tablet or inscription adds another fragment to the puzzle . Advancement in archaeology , comparative linguistics and digital imaging in more future years may one day bring us more closer to a miracle of the blood , sweat and tears these historians have put for the decipherment of the script . And when the script will finally speak , it may even reveal a continuity of religious symbolism that connects the ancient Indus valley to the broader religious traditions of the subcontinent . But till then the figurines in these seals speak a thousand words indirectly for what the script cannot convey yet .

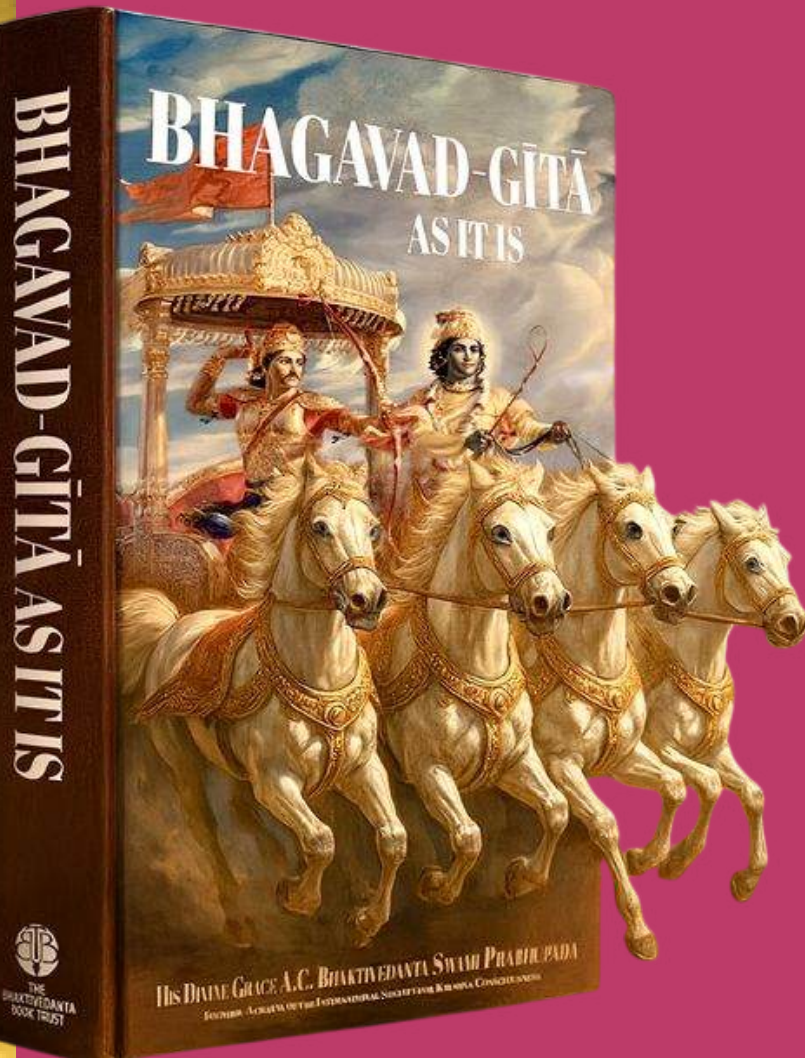
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EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

YAGVI GAUR



ABSTRACT

This research explores the concept of emotional regulation through a comparative analysis of the ancient spiritual philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita and contemporary psychological theories. Emotional regulation, the ability to best manage and deal with emotional states, in an adaptive way, is a critical part of contemporary cognitive-behavioral therapies as well as the spiritual wisdom shared by Lord Krishna with Arjuna in the Gita. With the primary texts of the Bhagavad Gita and seminal psychological theories formulated by James J. Gross and others, this paper puts the equivalence of concepts like mindfulness, detachment, cognitive restructuring, and mastery of self at the center of both systems. The Gita recommends self-restraint (Atma-samyam), karma yoga, and detachment, whereas psychology uses therapeutic tools like CBT, DBT, ACT, and MBCT to impart emotional resilience. This research finds striking similarity of means and ends, in spite of differences in language and context, evidence that emotional regulation is a cross-cultural human necessity. It also shows how ancient wisdom can be used to supplement contemporary therapeutic modalities towards the development of integrated mental

Keywords : Bhagavad Gita, Emotional Regulation, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Mindfulness, Atma-Samyam, Karma Yoga, Detachment, Vairagya, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, James Gross, Mental Health, Indian Philosophy, Psychology and Spirituality, Arjuna and Krishna Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

"Emotional regulation refers to shaping which emotion one has, when one has them, and how one experiences or expresses these emotions" (James J. Gross, 2014)

This means that people can control their emotions to some extent. We always do not respond how we feel over it, we choose how we should respond. For

example, instead of immediately reacting with anger when someone says something hurtful, we can decide to stay calm and respond later. That is regulating which emotion we choose. Emotional regulation also includes the decision when to show your true emotions. For instance, if you're nervous before a speech, you might try to calm yourself

down so that nervousness doesn't ruin your performance. Lastly, it means changing how strongly we feel an emotion and whether or not we express it. You might feel sad but choose not to cry in public, or you may try to think more positively to feel better. These small choices shape our emotional life every day.

In modern psychology, emotional regulation is considered a key part of mental health and well-being. It helps individuals manage how they feel, when they feel it, and how they express those emotions. Interestingly, the Bhagavad Gita, a spiritual-philosophical text written over two thousand years ago, also teaches us how to manage our emotions in times of stress, confusion, and conflict. Psychology and philosophy find common ground when Krishna guides Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra—showing him how to stay calm, balanced, and focused despite overwhelming fear and sorrow. This shows that both ancient wisdom and modern science deeply care about how we respond to emotional challenges, even if they use different languages to explain it. What we call "emotional regulation" today can be seen in the Gita as (Atma-Samyam) the inner discipline and self-mastery Krishna encourages. The teachings of Krishna are essentially teachings of emotional regulation. While the term itself is modern, the practice has its roots in the ancient wisdom of the Gita, marking the beginning of a lifelong inner journey.

Emotional regulation is crucial for a person's overall well-being and is essential for adaptive functioning in daily life. It involves managing emotional responses in ways that are appropriate to the situation and to the individual's self-image. The way a person chooses to express emotions depends not only on internal control but also on the social context, such as who they are interacting with and how they want to be perceived. In the Indian philosophical system, the idea of *nyantran* (self-control) is considered a core virtue, emphasizing the importance of mastering one's inner impulses before acting. Emotional regulation also plays a significant role in how people respond to stressful or threatening situations, often described in psychology as the fight-or-flight response. In such

The Bhagavad Gita, a respected part of the Indian epic Mahabharata, is a conversation between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, set on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. In this dialogue, Krishna shares deep wisdom about life, emotions, and doing one's duty. One of the key ideas in the Gita is the concept of the *atman*, or true self, which is eternal and different from the body or mind. This idea is similar to what modern psychology calls identity or self-awareness. The Gita also talks about different levels of awareness, like being awake, dreaming, and reaching a peaceful, meditative state called *samadhi*.

These ideas are like today's studies on mindfulness and consciousness. Krishna also teaches Arjuna how to handle emotions like anger, fear, and desire, encouraging him to stay calm and balanced. This connects well with modern methods like cognitive-behavioral therapy, which also focuses on managing emotions. The Gita also explores moral decision-making. Arjuna's struggle between doing his duty and avoiding conflict reflects psychological ideas about ethics and responsibility. Overall, the Gita offers a deep understanding of the human mind, emotions, and behavior - lessons that are still useful and meaningful today, even in modern psychology.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Bhagavad Gita is where all the emotions are expressed by Arjun, and Krishna gives answers to these situations. That's why it is always said that when a person reads the Gita, they should start reading with a daily life question, and when they read the Gita, they will get an answer to their

question. Gita is the biggest example of emotional regulation. Now let's go into depth and see how Gita connects to modern psychological concepts and frameworks.

Arjuna faces an emotional crisis. Seeing all those relations present there, Arjuna was filled with deep compassion and uttered these words in sadness. Arjuna said: "Kṛṣṇa, at the sight of these kinsmen arrayed for battle, my limbs give way, and my mouth is parching; nay, a shiver runs through my body and hair stand upright" (Gita 1.27–30). These lines show a loss of emotional control and lead to emotional dysregulation. Arjuna shows anxiety symptoms as he prepares to fight with his family members on both sides. This moment becomes the foundation for Krishna's psychological and spiritual intervention, making it a key moment of transformation from emotional chaos to inner mastery. In this chapter, Arjuna shows his confusion. He also states: "We hear that men who have lost their family traditions dwell in hell for an indefinite period of time." He is truly in a dilemma, how can he attack his own relatives? What does throne and luxury matter if he has to fight against his kinsmen? It will be better for him if Dhṛtarāṣṭra kills him. These all show a confused state for Arjuna and his emotional dysregulation, that he is backing off with anxiety before the war.

When Krishna asks him, "Why do you have these thoughts? Leave them and get ready to fight," Arjuna says how can he attack Bhīṣma and Droṇa. Śrī Bhagavān again said: "Arjuna, you grieve over those who should not be grieved for, and yet speak like the learned; wise men do not sorrow over the dead or the living." He explains to him that the soul cannot be killed. He says, "Arjuna, this soul dwelling in the bodies of all can never be slain; therefore, you should not mourn for anyone" (Gita 2.30). Also, he says that the warrior-chiefs who thought highly of you will now despise you, thinking that it was fear which drove you from battle. He says either die and you will have heaven, or win and you will have sovereignty on earth. Here Krishna gives a motivational speech and uses the technique of reinforcement and confidence boost-up. We can also connect this to modern behavioral psychology, where positive framing and perspective shift are used to regulate fear.

"Your right is to work only, but never to the fruit thereof. Be not instrumental in making your actions bear fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction." (Gita 2.47). Here Śrī Krishna teaches Arjuna selfless action (niṣkāma karma yoga) and also detached engagement, which is key to emotional control. Emotional dysregulation led to fear of failure, confusion, and anxiety in Arjuna. Krishna asks Arjuna to focus on the process and do his karma, not on the outcome or fruit. Krishna encourages Arjuna to shift focus from result-based thinking to process-based action, which reduces emotional reactivity. In modern psychological frameworks, this aligns with cognitive reappraisal where a situation is reframed to reduce its emotional impact, and CBT, where it is asked to emphasize the things which can be controlled like the process rather than outcomes, which cannot be controlled.

Arjuna, perform your duties established in Yoga, renouncing attachment, and be even-tempered in success and failure; evenness of temper is called Yoga (Gita 2.48). Here Krishna tells Arjuna to be mature and detach from both fear of failure and greed for success. This verse is foundational for karma yoga: do your work and accept the situation. It is related to emotional resilience, which is the ability to adapt well to stress, adversity, trauma, or significant sources of stress. Here three frameworks of psychology can be seen: first, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which makes one aware of the situation and ups and downs and not get affected by them; second, Emotional Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT), accepting emotions and emotional distancing; third, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), framing our judgment and being equal on both sides. Śrī Krishna also says that a wise person leaves behind both good and bad actions and focuses only on doing karma with skill and balance. He teaches that yoga means doing actions with understanding, without emotional attachment. This helps in regulating emotions like guilt, fear, and pride. It connects with CBT and DBT where actions are done mindfully and with a balanced state of mind, not under emotional pressure. CBT helps change negative thoughts by focusing on

logic, like Krishna asking Arjuna to think beyond fear. DBT teaches balance between emotion and reason, just like Krishna's guidance to act with awareness and inner control. Krishna says that a person who gives up all desires of the mind and finds satisfaction within the self is called stable in wisdom. This teaches emotional control by being self-sufficient and not dependent on outer situations. It reflects mindfulness and inner peace, where joy comes from within. Krishna explains the chain reaction of emotional downfall: anger leads to attachment, which clouds memory, destroys reasoning, and ultimately brings ruin. This is a powerful psychological insight into how unregulated emotions escalate. "As the waters of different rivers enter the ocean, which though full on all sides remains undisturbed, likewise he is whom all enjoyments merge themselves attains peace; not he who hankers after such enjoyments" (Gita 2.70).

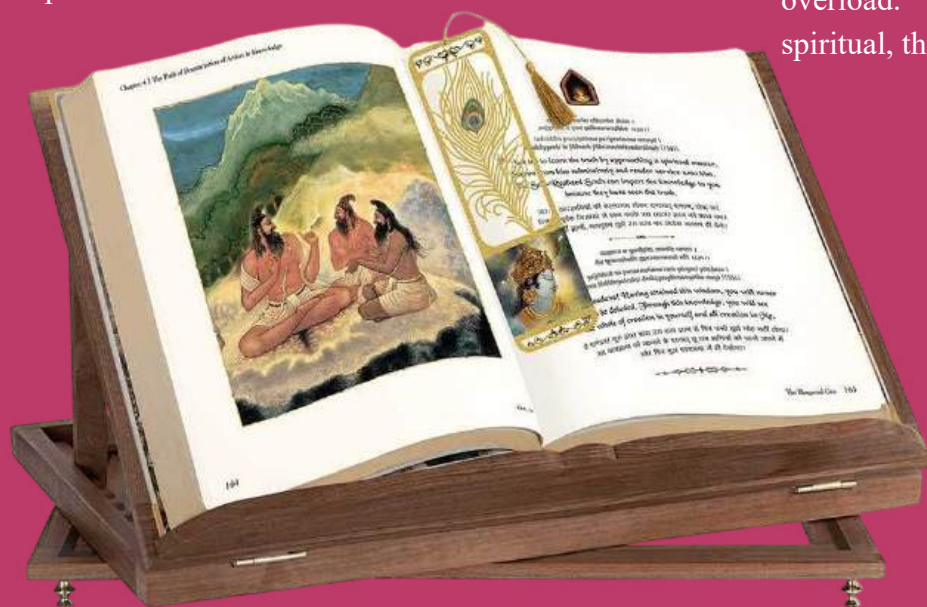
In Shloka 4.39, Krishna beautifully shows that emotional peace is not something that just happens, it is earned through faith, control, and dedication. He tells Arjuna that if a person truly believes, has discipline over their senses, and is committed, then knowledge will come to them naturally. And once they have that knowledge, they will gain deep inner peace. This is not just a spiritual idea but also a guide for emotional regulation. When Arjuna was lost in fear and confusion, Krishna didn't just throw facts, he told him to first have faith. That's the first step in healing emotionally. In modern psychology too, it's said that belief in oneself and in the process matters.

Whether it is through cognitive therapies or mindfulness, without trust and self-discipline, emotional calm cannot be achieved. Krishna connects faith with emotional clarity, showing that sometimes, we need to quiet the noise of doubt with belief and patience.

In Shloka 6.5, Krishna reminds Arjuna that the real battle is within, only we can uplift or destroy ourselves, making self-mastery the first step in emotional regulation. This reflects modern psychology's focus on self-agency, where healing begins by taking responsibility. In 6.6, Krishna deepens this by saying the mind can be either our best friend or worst enemy, depending on whether we've trained it. Just like in therapy today, especially CBT, our thoughts shape our emotions and actions. Krishna teaches that emotional strength doesn't come from avoiding the storm but mastering it. In 6.35, he acknowledges how hard it is to control the mind but offers a way - *abhyāsa* (practice) and *vairāgya* (detachment). This echoes modern mindfulness and self-discipline approaches: steady effort and reduced emotional clinging slowly lead to inner stability. Krishna's guidance mirrors today's psychological tools for emotional balance - practical, honest, and deeply human.

In Shloka 9.22, Krishna explains the importance of faith in psychology. He says if one surrenders fully and stays devoted with focus, He Himself takes care of their needs and protections, which means don't carry burden if your intentions are pure and you are focused. This trust reduces emotional overload. Krishna's words here are not just spiritual, they're deeply therapeutic. "I am the Self,

O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings." (Gita 10.20). Krishna says He is not far away, He is within us. This idea echoes modern psychological ideas of mindfulness and self-awareness, where healing starts when we connect inward. Recognizing that something divine or whole exists within calms emotional storms.



In Shloka 11.36, Arjuna's fear transforms as he witnesses Krishna's divine form, showing a shift from emotional turmoil to clarity. He realizes that surrender is not weakness but emotional maturity. This aligns with psychological concepts of emotional acceptance and spiritual anchoring. In Shloka 12.13–14, Krishna describes one who has no hatred, is friendly and compassionate, free from ego, patient, and forgiving. Such a person remains calm in both joy and sorrow, showing stable emotional resilience. This perfectly reflects traits encouraged in modern psychology like emotional balance, empathy, and self-regulation.

Chapter 14 explains the three gunas - Sattva (balance), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia) - which influence our emotions and behaviors. Krishna says Sattva brings clarity and peace, Rajas causes attachment and restlessness, while Tamas leads to confusion and delusion. Emotional regulation depends on increasing Sattva and reducing Rajas and Tamas, much like modern psychology aims to cultivate balanced states over impulsive or depressive tendencies through awareness and disciplined practices. These are also stated in the triguna theory of personality.

In verses 18.33–35, Krishna beautifully explains how our determination reflects the way we manage emotions. When our mind is calm, focused, and balanced (sattvic), we naturally regulate emotions better, even during challenges. But when we're driven by desires (rajasic), or caught in confusion and fear (tamasic), our emotional control weakens. Krishna helps us see that true strength isn't just about willpower - it's about clarity, purpose, and a peaceful mind.

The Bhagavad Gita does not tell us to remove or avoid emotions completely. Instead, it teaches us how to understand our emotions, manage them, and use them in the right way. When Krishna talks to Arjuna, he listens carefully to Arjuna's pain and fear. He does not ignore or reject Arjuna's feelings. He accepts them, and then guides Arjuna to look at the situation differently. This is very similar to what happens in modern psychology, especially in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). In CBT, a person is helped to change how they think about their problems so they can feel and act better.

Krishna does the same. He helps Arjuna think clearly, see the bigger picture, and take the right decision with peace of mind.

In the sixth chapter of the Gita, Krishna explains that the mind can be our best friend or our worst enemy (Gita 6.5–6.6). This means if we learn to control and train our mind, we can live a happy and peaceful life. But if we let the mind control us, then we suffer from stress, anger, and sadness. This teaching is very close to modern psychology, which also says that our thoughts shape our feelings and behaviors. If we change how we think, we can improve how we feel. This is the idea behind many therapies that help people with anxiety, depression, or emotional breakdowns.



Another very important lesson in the Gita is about detachment. Detachment does not mean that we stop caring or become cold. It means we stay calm and balanced no matter what happens. For example, when Krishna tells Arjuna to fight, he also tells him

to not worry about the results. He should do his duty, but not be attached to success or failure. This is called karma yoga, doing your work without getting too emotional about the results. In today's world, this teaching can help people deal with stress, pressure, and fear of failure. If we only focus on doing our best and stop worrying too much about outcomes, we can reduce a lot of mental tension.

Krishna also teaches self-awareness and knowing one's true self (atman). He says that understanding the self brings peace and stability. This is like the idea of emotional intelligence in psychology. People who understand their feelings and know who they are, handle problems better. They don't panic or act without thinking. They stay calm, just like Krishna asks Arjuna to stay calm and focused in the middle of a great battle.

Another major point in the Gita is about fear and death. Arjuna is afraid of fighting and killing his family members. He is also scared of death and destruction. But Krishna tells him that the soul cannot die. The body may be destroyed, but the real self is eternal (Gita 2.20–2.30). This helps Arjuna understand that he is not doing something wrong by performing his duty. This teaching gives strength and comfort, especially in times of loss or fear. In psychology too, learning to accept death as a part of life helps people cope with grief, sadness, and fear of loss.

The three gunas - sattva (balance), rajas (activity), and tamas (inactivity). These qualities affect how we think, feel, and act. Krishna says that to stay emotionally stable, we should increase sattva and reduce rajas and tamas. This is just like how modern psychology encourages us to build healthy habits, keep a clear mind, and avoid too much stress or laziness.

In the end, Krishna's teachings help us understand that emotions are not bad. But we must learn to guide them. Just like a driver controls a car, we must control our emotions. If we let them take control, we may crash. But if we stay aware and calm, we can reach our goals. This is the heart of emotional regulation whether in the Gita or in psychology today.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS.

In contemporary psychology, emotional regulation is regarded as a vital cognitive and behavioral function, essential for psychological well-being, adaptive behavior, and social functioning. This regulation involves the conscious and unconscious processes individuals use to influence their emotions, how they experience and express them. Among the foundational contributors to this field is James J. Gross, whose process model of emotion regulation has been widely accepted and applied in both clinical and experimental psychology. The model describes emotional regulation as a multistage process that begins before an emotion is fully generated and continues through its development and expression.

Gross identifies five key stages: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change (reappraisal), and response modulation. These stages represent a timeline where intervention can occur to modify emotional outcomes. For example, in the cognitive change phase, a person might reinterpret a stressful event in a more positive light, which is known as cognitive reappraisal. This strategy is highly effective for long-term emotional health. In contrast, emotional suppression - where a person attempts to hide or inhibit emotional responses may offer short-term social benefits but often results in internal distress and increased physiological arousal. Gross's model is especially important in therapy and behavioral research, as it offers specific points where emotional interventions can be applied.

One of the most influential applications of emotional regulation is found in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT teaches individuals to become aware of their automatic thoughts and how these thoughts influence their emotions and behaviors. Emotional regulation in CBT involves identifying irrational or distorted thinking, challenging it, and replacing it with more constructive and adaptive alternatives. A person dealing with intense anxiety, for instance, might learn to reframe their thoughts about a feared

situation from “I will fail and embarrass myself” to “I may feel nervous, but I can handle it.” This cognitive restructuring not only changes emotional outcomes but also enhances self-efficacy and resilience. Emotional regulation through CBT emphasizes changing internal dialogue, allowing a person to act thoughtfully rather than impulsively.

Another key framework that integrates emotional regulation is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), originally developed by Marsha Linehan for individuals with borderline personality disorder. DBT builds on CBT but incorporates elements of mindfulness and emotional acceptance. One of DBT’s central components is emotion regulation skills training, which includes identifying emotions, increasing positive emotional experiences, reducing emotional vulnerability, and applying techniques to decrease emotional intensity. DBT recognizes that emotions serve adaptive purposes, but when dysregulated, they can become destructive. Through mindfulness and distress tolerance techniques, clients are encouraged to experience emotions without being overwhelmed by them, a process that echoes the non-attachment and self-awareness promoted in philosophical texts like the Bhagavad Gita.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is another significant therapeutic model that approaches emotional regulation differently. ACT does not aim to change or suppress emotions directly but instead teaches emotional acceptance and psychological flexibility. In ACT, individuals learn to observe their emotions non-judgmentally and to commit to values-based actions regardless of emotional discomfort. This approach recognizes that pain is a natural part of life and that fighting emotions often worsens the problem. By defusing from unhelpful thoughts and grounding themselves in the present moment, clients build a healthier relationship with their internal experiences. Emotional regulation in ACT is about reducing avoidance, increasing emotional openness, and choosing purposeful behavior even in the face of discomfort.

In recent years, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) has gained prominence,

particularly for preventing relapse in depression. MBCT combines traditional CBT techniques with mindfulness practices that cultivate present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance. Emotional regulation here is enhanced through non-reactivity, decentering from negative thoughts, and observing the flow of emotions without clinging to or suppressing them. Research shows that MBCT improves emotional regulation by reducing rumination, increasing awareness of emotional triggers, and enhancing the ability to disengage from automatic emotional patterns. These outcomes mirror the inner steadiness and detached observation taught in the Bhagavad Gita, where Krishna emphasizes equanimity and inner calm.

Another contemporary model includes emotion regulation as a transdiagnostic factor—a process involved across various psychological disorders. Studies have demonstrated that poor emotional regulation skills are linked to depression, anxiety, substance use, eating disorders, and PTSD. For instance, individuals with depression may overuse maladaptive strategies like rumination or withdrawal, while those with anxiety disorders might rely on avoidance or safety behaviors. Aldao et al. (2010) conducted a meta-analysis showing that maladaptive strategies such as suppression and avoidance are positively correlated with psychopathology, whereas adaptive strategies like reappraisal and problem-solving are negatively correlated. This suggests that teaching and reinforcing emotional regulation is critical in both prevention and treatment.

In addition to therapy-based models, neuroscience has increasingly contributed to understanding the brain's role in emotional regulation. Brain imaging studies have shown that the prefrontal cortex is essential for regulating emotional responses initiated in the amygdala, which is responsible for detecting threats. When individuals apply reappraisal or mindfulness, the prefrontal cortex exerts top-down control, dampening the intensity of emotional responses. This scientific insight confirms what many traditional wisdom systems including the Gita have long suggested: regulation begins with self-awareness and conscious

redirection of mental energy.

Beyond clinical applications, emotional regulation is also a growing area of interest in positive psychology, which focuses on strengths, virtues, and well-being. According to this field, emotionally regulated individuals are more likely to experience gratitude, compassion, optimism, and resilience. These traits not only enhance personal well-being but also improve social functioning and interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence models, such as those proposed by Daniel Goleman, include emotional regulation as a core component and show its relevance in leadership, education, and workplace performance. In this context, emotional regulation is not just about managing problems but about enhancing potential. Ultimately, emotional regulation in modern psychology is both a skill and a developmental process. It can be learned, practiced, and improved with time. From cognitive change strategies in CBT to mindfulness and emotional acceptance in MBCT, DBT, and ACT, the psychological field offers a comprehensive set of tools that echo ancient teachings in contemporary form. These tools emphasize the importance of awareness, detachment, practice, and inner clarity—ideas that resonate deeply with the Bhagavad Gita's call for equanimity and inner mastery.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Emotional regulation, a cornerstone of psychological well-being, has become a vital area of focus in both contemporary mental health studies and ancient philosophical texts. While modern psychology defines emotional regulation as the conscious and unconscious processes by which individuals influence the emotions they experience and express (Gross, 2014), the Bhagavad Gita offers an equally profound but spiritually grounded interpretation of how emotions can be managed, transformed, and transcended. This comparative analysis aims to explore the parallels and divergences between these two knowledge systems, with specific emphasis on key psychological concepts such as mindfulness, self-control, subconscious reprogramming, and purpose-driven behavior.

In Gross's conceptualization, emotional regulation is deeply intertwined with cognitive processes and the workings of the unconscious. He emphasizes that individuals manage their emotions through strategies like attentional deployment, cognitive reappraisal, and suppression each engaging with different stages of emotional response. Similarly, the Bhagavad Gita addresses emotional struggles by rooting them in the subconscious, described through the concept of *samskaras*, or latent impressions that shape human perception and behavior (Pardhe, 2025). Krishna teaches Arjuna that his emotional paralysis is not simply a momentary lapse but a reflection of deep-seated karmic patterns and inner conflicts.

Both frameworks acknowledge that unregulated emotional patterns often stem from subconscious influences. Freud's psychoanalysis and Gross's model share a belief in the significance of past experiences in shaping current emotional responses. The Gita mirrors this through its assertion that our *vasanas* (deep-rooted desires) and *samskaras* cloud our judgment and fuel attachment, fear, and delusion. However, while modern psychology tends to rely on clinical interventions like CBT to restructure thought patterns, the Gita prescribes spiritual practices such as meditation, detachment, and selfless action to purify and align the subconscious.

Meditation is a common ground where the Gita and modern therapeutic approaches converge. In the Gita, Krishna presents meditation as a method of attaining equanimity and discipline over the mind, specifically in verses like 6.10–6.15, which lay out detailed meditative postures and attitudes. This resonates with Gross's research, which points to mindfulness-based strategies as highly effective emotional regulation tools. Programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) have been shown to reduce emotional reactivity and improve resilience by fostering a non-judgmental awareness of present experience (Gross, 2014).

The Gita extends the goal of meditation beyond mental calmness to spiritual liberation, emphasizing detachment (*vairagya*) and concentration (*abhyasa*) as dual pillars of mental discipline. While modern psychology generally

views meditation as a therapeutic or performance-enhancing practice, the Gita frames it as a transformative spiritual journey that restructures one's entire inner architecture.

One of the most distinctive contributions of the Gita to emotional regulation is the concept of Karma Yoga - selfless action without attachment to results. This notion directly aligns with psychological principles of intrinsic motivation and goal-oriented behavior. The Gita's teaching in 3.19, "Perform your obligatory duty, because action is indeed better than inaction," emphasizes commitment to duty over emotional turbulence caused by fear or desire for outcomes.



This philosophy mirrors key elements of behavioral activation and goal-setting strategies in modern psychology. For instance, CBT encourages individuals to engage in valued activities regardless of emotional state, gradually improving mood through positive reinforcement. Karma Yoga, similarly, advocates for action driven by purpose and values rather than emotional fluctuations. According to Pardhe (2025), this mode of action cultivates psychological stability and clarity, helping individuals detach from ego-driven motivations and thereby reducing anxiety, guilt, dharma

and emotional instability.

Modern psychological theories, particularly CBT, prioritize the role of belief systems in emotional health. Cognitive restructuring involves challenging and reframing negative thoughts to change emotional outcomes. Surprisingly, the Gita too places enormous emphasis on belief — specifically shraddha (faith). In 9.3, Krishna explains that a person lacking faith cannot attain wisdom or peace. Faith, as presented in the Gita, is not blind submission but an intentional alignment of the inner self with higher truths.

Faith-based cognitive strategies, though underutilized in Western therapy, have shown significant promise in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression (Pardhe, 2025). These strategies involve trusting in a higher purpose, reframing adversity as a test or lesson, and integrating meaning-making into emotional regulation. The Bhagavad Gita uses faith as a cognitive anchor to help individuals interpret suffering not as a setback but as a spiritual opportunity, an idea echoed in Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and elements of positive psychology.

A significant philosophical divergence arises in how the two systems treat emotional detachment. In Gross's model, suppression - consciously inhibiting emotional expression, is often seen as a less adaptive strategy, associated with negative psychological outcomes. Conversely, the Gita advocates for detachment, not as emotional suppression, but as transcendence. Detachment in the Gita means recognizing emotions without becoming enslaved by them. It is the ability to act rightly, even in the presence of strong emotional currents.

This spiritual detachment is more akin to psychological acceptance in third-wave therapies like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), where individuals are encouraged to observe their emotions without resistance or avoidance. Therefore, while terminologies differ, the underlying aim in both is emotional resilience — the capacity to navigate emotional storms without losing one's moral or mental equilibrium.

Another point of intersection is the dialogic and therapeutic relationship between Arjuna and

Krishna, which mirrors the client-therapist dynamic. Krishna, through compassionate dialogue, validation of Arjuna's emotions, and structured advice, functions in a way similar to a cognitive therapist. He allows Arjuna to articulate his fears, reframes his cognitive distortions, and guides him toward committed action based on his deeper values and dharma.

This framework aligns with the principles of motivational interviewing, where the counselor helps the client resolve ambivalence and strengthen motivation for change. According to Sehrawat and Angiras (2020), Krishna's method exemplifies empathy, Socratic questioning, and collaborative goal-setting elements central to effective psychotherapy.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of emotional regulation through both the lens of modern psychology and the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita reveals a profound and enriching convergence. While contemporary psychological frameworks such as CBT, DBT, ACT, and MBCT offer structured methods for understanding and managing emotions, the Gita provides a timeless spiritual blueprint grounded in self-awareness, detachment, and purposeful action. Both systems emphasize the importance of inner mastery, resilience, and aligning one's thoughts and actions with higher values. The Gita's teachings centered on mindfulness, non-attachment, karma yoga, and faith mirror the therapeutic goals of emotional regulation in Western psychology. Moreover, the therapeutic dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna serves as a powerful model for compassionate guidance and introspective transformation.

This comparative study shows that emotional regulation is not confined to clinical techniques or religious doctrine; it is a universal human need addressed across cultures and epochs. Integrating the philosophical depth of the Gita with evidence-based psychological practices can offer a holistic path for emotional healing, personal growth, and spiritual well-being. As modern society continues to grapple with mental health challenges, drawing wisdom from ancient texts like the Bhagavad Gita

alongside psychological science can foster more balanced, integrated approaches to emotional resilience.

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AGAMA SHASTRAS: EXPLORING THE ART OF TEMPLE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THE AGES

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TEMPLE OF JAGGANNATH.

ABSTRACT

Hindu temples are breathtaking monuments to a rich, interwoven tapestry of faith and artistry. This paper explores how Āgama Śāstra has shaped the design and development of Hindu temples. Though separate from the Vedas, the Āgamas share their spirit and provide clear rules for choosing temple sites, building layouts, idol placement, and rituals. Key ideas like Sthala (location), Tīrtha (sacred

water), and Mūrti (idol) guide temple planning, supported by texts such as Manasara and Mayamata. The study also looks at how these principles influenced temple architecture in countries like Cambodia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Over time, interpretations of Āgama texts have changed, adapting to different regions and periods. Yet, even today, they remain important in temple architecture.

KEYWORDS – *Agamashastra, Manasara, Mayamata, temple architecture.*

INTRODUCTION

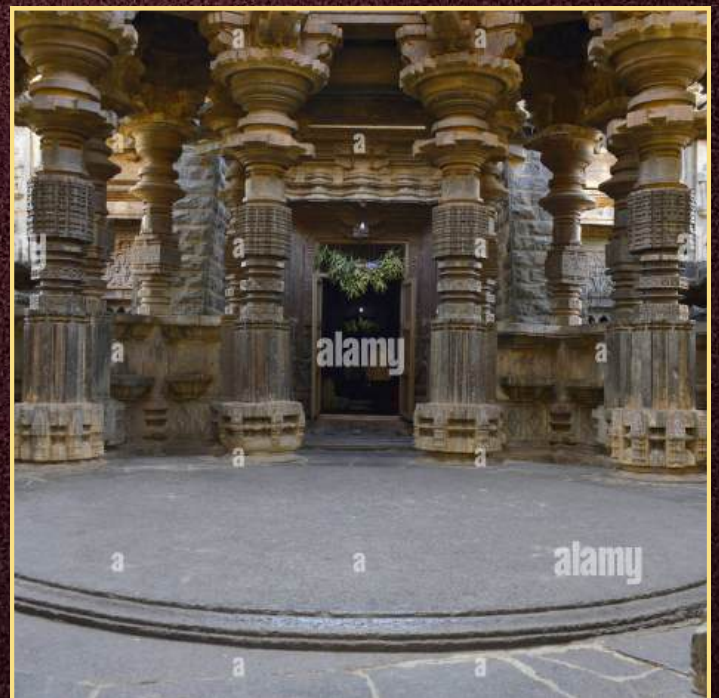
“The word 'Agama' literally means a 'well-structured and traditionally communicated wisdom’. One of the definitions of Agama is that, it is the knowledge that has been obtained either by direct observation, by inference or by the testimony of those who are wise and trustworthy and which will be beneficial to man both here and hereafter. The word 'Agama' refers to an ancient tradition, dealing with worship, the philosophical, psychological, ritualistic and behavioural aspects, which have come down to us by oral traditions as well as through written texts and documentation. Hence the dual meaning of the word 'Āgama', is the heritage or traditional wisdom as well as the texts.

Another definition is that Agama tells us about dharma and adharma and gives us comprehensive knowledge regarding the highest objective of man, according to those who know the Vedas. The Āgamas may be classified broadly into three groups on the basis of their sectarian affiliations: Saiva, Vaisṇāva and Śākta. The definition of Agama as applicable to the Śaiva-Agamas is that it is the wisdom which proceeded from the mouth of Siva and received by the ear of Parvati and absorbed by Vāsudeva (viz. Viṣṇu) and The Śākta-Agamas on the other hand, define Agamas as the wisdom revealed by Pārvati to Śiva.

Agama Shastra, as available in our Hindu scriptures is a collection of Sanskrit, Tamil and Grantha scriptures that contains, mainly, methods of temple construction, idol creation, philosophical doctrines and meditative practices that lays down the rules for worship, temple building, spirituality and rituals. Since ancient times it has been a guideline for many people of the Hindu faith. Agama Shastras are not part of the Vedas, they do not derive their authority directly from the Vedas. It cannot be dated some parts of it are pre vedic while the others are post vedic They are Vedic in spirit and character Vedic mantras are chanted while performing the service.

PRINCIPLES OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Temples are defined as public institutions and they involve social organization, They are different from shrines (grharca). Agama Shastra clearly states that Temples and places of worship cannot be built all rules for the same have to be followed as per agama shastra. As per the Agama Shastra , for a pilgrimage the three essentials are Sthala, Tirtha and Murthy, Sthala refers to the where the temple will be i.e place of the temple, the Tirtha signifies the temple tank and Murthy refers to the idol. There are rules in the Agama Shastra for just about every aspect, including the smallest detail, from the positioning of the holy figurine to the materials from which the temple is to be constructed. Kamikagama, Vaikhanasagama and Padmasamhita are important agamas . They provide details of construction of temples. The temple construction related important features are dealt in Devalaya Vastu .Prathima deals with the iconography and is scattered across the country Manasara and Mayamata are the most well known compilations on the theories and principles of temple construction They are the standard texts on Vastu Shastra, and they codify the theoretical aspects of temple construction Architectural science including topics such as soil testing techniques, orientation, measures and proportion, divination, astrology and ceremonies associated with the construction of buildings are explained in these texts.



The principles and meanings can be summarized as per the tabular format presented below:

PRINCIPLES	MEANING
1. Bhu pariksha	Evaluating a location and soil for temple and town with focus on fertility of land and suitable soil.
2. Sila pariksha:	Checking and choosing material for image
3. Karshana	Some crop is grown in the place first and is fed to cows only then the location is fit for town/temple construction
4. Vastu puja	Ritual to appease vastu devata
5. Salyodhara:	Digging out unwanted things like bones
6. Adyestaka	Laying down the first stone
7. Nirmana:	Foundation is laid and area is purified by sprinkling water. A pit is dug, water mixed with navaratnas, navadhanyas, navakhanijas is then put in and pit is filled. Then the temple is constructed.
8. Murdhestaka sthapana:	Placing the top stone over the prakara, gopura etc. This again involves creating cavities filled with gems minerals seeds etc. and then the pinnacles are placed.
9. Garbhanyasa:	A pot made of five metals (panchaloha kalasa sthapana) is installed at the place of main deity.
10. Sthapana:	Then the main deity is installed.
11. Pratistha:	The main deity is then charged with life/god-ness.

Some preliminary rituals are undertaken before beginning the construction of temples. Proper sites are to be selected for the formation of village or town where the temple is to be constructed. Such villages are described and are of some kinds with the names Dandaka, Svastika and others which are described in the texts. Provision must be made to build houses for people of various living. The finding of certain kinds of stones and gems are held to indicate the nature of the result when the temple is constructed there.

A temple in miniature called Bālālaya or Taruṇālaya, a replica of the temple to be constructed is to be built at the outset and an idol is to be installed there. Daily worship is to be offered to this idol. This shall be of a prescribed measurement and shall be like the idol to be installed later. Commencement of the building of the temple is marked by placing the first brick in a deep pit where the temple is to be constructed. Perfect and flawless stones are to be used for preparing the brick. A box is to be made out of metal. Gems of various kinds are to be placed within that box. It shall be closed and placed above the first brick. The entire pit is to be filled and covered with mud and minerals. It is on this that the sanctum sanctorum (garbhagrha) is to be built. The Garbhagrha is to have four main parts - pedestal (upapīṭha), basement (adhiṣṭhāna), pillar (pādabandha) and entablature (prastāra) are built in this order over another, the pedestal to rest on the pit. A corner pavilion called Karṇakūṭa is to be built on the prastāra. A vimāna (The structure over the garbhagriha or inner sanctum) is to be constructed above Karṇakūṭa. The vimāna may be of various kinds called Vaijayantī, Śrī Viśāla, Saubhadra and others such as Srikara, Pranavakara. The temples shall be of three quadrangular kinds, Vesara round in structure, Nagara and Drāvida octagonal or hexagonal. The final part in the construction of the temple is marked by placing the last brick which is called Anirdeśakavidhi.

The central axis is then to be fixed in the dome of the vimāna. Figures of several deities are to be made and fixed in their proper places in the

Vimana. They must be given coating with appropriate colours. The temples shall have enclosures (Prākāra) one, three or five in number. Provision must be made for Ardhamanṭapa ("Half hall" or transitional space. To be located between the garbha-grha and the maha manṭapa "Great hall", to be located right before the ardha manṭapa, closer to the sanctum), kitchen, Vastrālaya (place where clothes of Gods and Goddesses are kept), Dhānyaśāla- granary, Yāgamanṭapa (for performing sacrifices or Yajña), Sopānamanṭapa (pavilion or platform with steps leading up to a higher level or temple) and Nr̥ttamanṭapa (for dance). The figure of some deities are to be placed in the walls of enclosures facing particular directions. The figure of the lion or of Garuda shall adorn the corners of the walls of the enclosures. Even the idols of Dvarapalas are sculpted on either sides of the main idol's door. The Agamas use the words 'bera', arca', 'pratīma', bimba' and mūrti' in the sense of the idols which are made.

TEMPLE CULTURE

The building of these temples is an institutionalized activity, involving not only unskilled labour, skilled workers, masons, sculptors, wood-carvers and metal-workers but those who provide patronage and incur the expenditure. The earliest form of temple structures can be traced back to the second and first centuries before Christ. Well-known is the Brahmi inscriptions of the second century B.C. found at Besnagar (Vidīśā in Madhya- Pradesh) which commemorates the erection of a religious column in honour of the 'revered Vasudeva', 'the god of gods', The pillar was erected by the Indo-Greek ambassador, Heliodorus. In Ghosundi (in Rajasthan) an inscription was found recording the construction of a stone-enclosure for the worship of the hero-gods Sankarśaṇa and Vāsudeva, by a chieftain named Gājāyana, This is attributed to the first century B.C. While neither of the inscriptions specifically mentions the construction of a temple, the flag-column (garuda-dhvaja) mentioned in the former inscription and the stone-enclosure (pūjā-silā-prākāra) mentioned in the second strongly

suggest the presence of a shrine of some sort.-

The earliest structural temple is a remarkable brick-structure that has survived is the one at Bhitargāon (near Kanpur in Uttar-Pradesh). It has numerous terra-cotta plaques depicting the forms and deeds of Visnu and Durgā. Built in the 5th century during Gupta period. Considered to be the oldest remaining Hīndu shrine with a roof and a high shikhara. Another temple ascribed to the same period and to the kings of the same dynasty is the stone temple (called Daśāvatāra temple) at Deogarh (also in the same region). This temple is now in ruins (unlike the Bhitargaon temple).

The early formal temples were rock-cut, natural rock-shrines. Rock-shrines were mostly caves, and caves were important centres of the cults of the mother-goddess from pre-historic times. The expression "Guheśvari" (the lady of the cave) is a common designation for the mother-goddess all over the country. And numerous ancient shrines of the mother-goddess are just caves, often empty caves (the later sanctum) with no icon inside. In the wake of iconic representation of the worshipful divinities, Visnu icons appear to have been the first, followed by the iconic (murti) as well as the aniconic (linga) representations of Siva. When the icon was installed in the rock shelter or sanctum, the shelter or sanctum itself symbolized the mother-goddess.

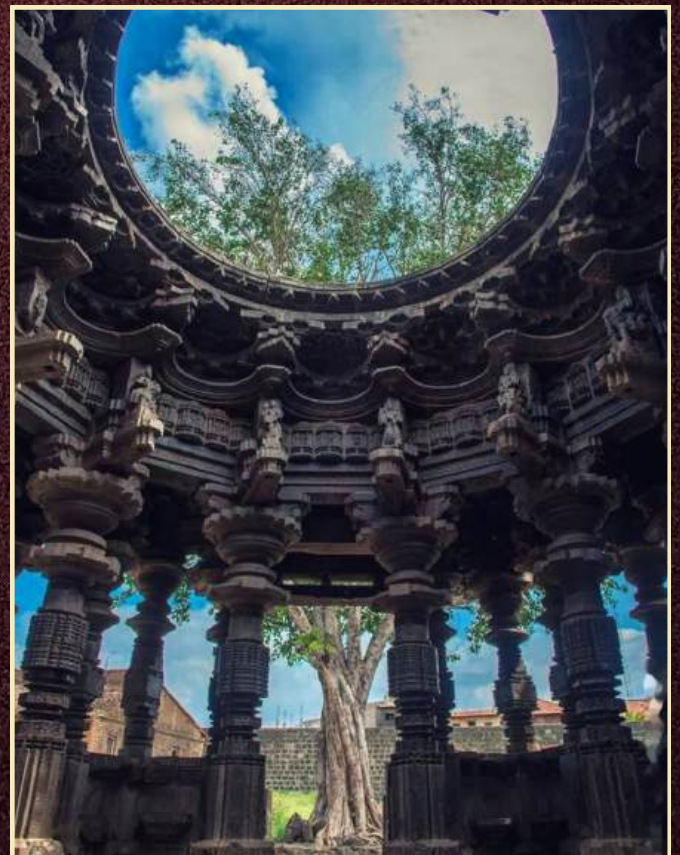
Images privately worshipped at home are 'household-icons' (grhārcā), and images installed in temples for public worship are 'temple-icons' (ālayārca). A temple is described in the Agama texts as the body (deha) of godhead, and the image in the sanctum, the 'soul' (jīva). The temple acquires significance only by the image installed in it. The temple as a structure houses the image, and as an institution provides for worshipping the image.

The temple may be built in stone (śilāmaya), when it is considered the best, or in bricks (istaka), (average), or in wood (dāru), when it is regarded as inferior (Visṇu-tilaka-samhita. 176; Kāpiṇjala-samhitā,10,3-4). When the entire temple is built of one material only (stone, bricks or wood) it is 'pure'

(śuddha); when two materials are used, it is mixed (miśra); and when all three materials are used, it is complex (samkirṇa) (Mānasāra, 18, 99,100).

The 'pure' type of temples has only one material from the foundation to the finial, while the 'mixed' type has stone for the main structure (ālaya) and brick for the superstructure (śikhara); and the 'complex' type has stone for the foundation, brick and wood for the main structure, and brick for the superstructure. Temples built of brick and wood (viz. without using stone) are considered inferior and wood (viz. without using stone) are considered inferior, and not recommended. Temples built entirely of mud are prohibited (īśanā-śiva-guru-deva-paddhatī, 86,89;

It is prescribed in the āgamas that the temple must have a surrounding wall (prākāra) in stone with an opening facing the sanctum (called the principal gateway or mahā-dvāra); and sometimes the gateways will be in all four directions. Mānasāra (31,1 -134) mentions that the prākāra gives strength (bala) to the temple, accommodates subsidiary deities (parivāra-devatā), adds charm to the structure (shobha), and provides defence (raksana).



MAJOR ELEMENTS OF A TEMPLE

Sikhara	spire or the tower, It is shaped as pyramidal and tapering.
Meru	highest mountain peak
Garbhagriha	womb chamber which is the innermost chamber of any temple where the deity resides. It is mainly square in layout and is entered through eastern side.
Pradakshina Patha	The path for circumambulation and comprises of enclosed corridor outside the garbhagriha. The devotees walk around the deity in clockwise direction, paying their respect to the deity.
Mandapa	The pillared hall in front of the garbhagriha, used as assembling point by devotees for chant; rituals meditate or observe the priests perform the rituals.
Natamandira	Provided in some temples which mean the hall for dancing.
Antarala	The intermediate chamber which joins the main sanctuary and the pillared hall of the temple premises.
Ardhamandapa	The front porch in the main entrance of the temple which leads to the main temple

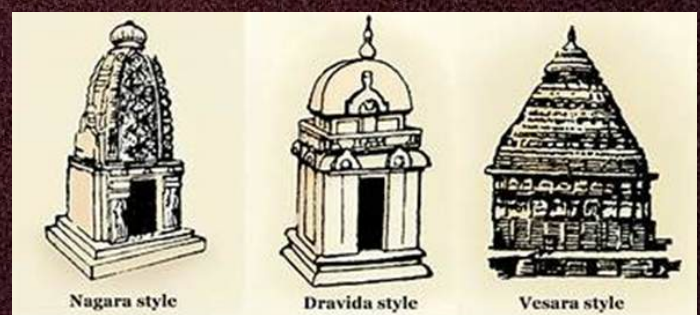
Some other essential structural elements found in the Hindu temples in the south :

- Gopurams are the monumental and ornate entrance or gateways to the temple premises.
- Pithas- the plinths of the main temple.
- The gateways typical to north Indian temples are, Toranas while to the southern temples are Gopurams.

Basic elements which remain same

- Garbhagriha or the sanctum where the main idol of the deity is housed
- Mandapa or the portico which leads to the garbhagriha, where the worshipers assemble
- Shikhara that is the spire above the sanctum
- Vahana which is the mount or vehicle of the main deity of the temple

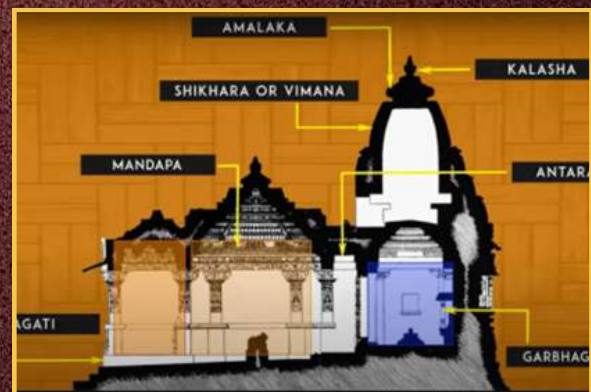
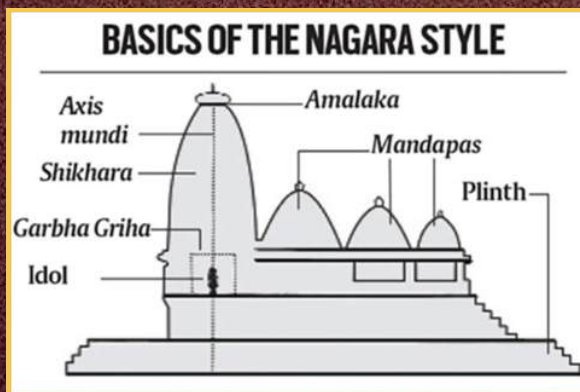
MAJOR FORMS OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN INDIA



NAGARA

The Nagara style of temple architecture originated around the 5th century AD, with prominent regions of influence including Northern India, Karnataka, and parts of Madhya Pradesh. The word "Nagara" itself means "city", underscoring close association with urban architectural principles. The Nagara style temples display a unique blend of indigenous elements and influences from central Asia. It is characterized by its tower-like spires known as “shikhara,” which rise vertically, symbolizing the sacred mountain, Meru. This temple style of architecture is closely associated with the Shaivite and Vaishnavite sects of Hinduism, reflecting their spiritual aspirations. Some of them include Kandariya Mahadev Temple in Khajuraho, Sun Temple in Konark, the Sun Temple in Modhera, Gujarat, and the Ossian Temple in Gujarat.

Nāgara style of temple architecture consists of four-sided plan.. According to temple architecture the garbhagriha or sanctum sanctorum houses the idol of the main deity or the image. The garbhagriha is a perfect square whereas Although the whole temple plan could be oblong The garbhagriha is a perfect square. the mandapa is the pathway leading to the garbhagriha It is where the worshipers assemble to have darśana. Over period of time, more mandapas were added. A pradakshinapatha or a circumambulatory path surrounded the garbhagriha. Windows called gavaksa were added in many cases to allow cross ventilation and sun rays to enter the temple.



FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
1) Garbhagriha:-	Sanctum sanctorum. It's literal translation is "womb-house". Garbhagriha is the womb chamber where the icon or murti of the main deity resides. It is generally square in layout and is entered through eastern gateway of the temple.
2) Shikhara:-	"Shikhar" means "mountain top" in Sanskrit .It refers to the tower. It is tapering representing the mythological Meru (the highest mountain peak). The elevation of the shikhara symbolises ascent from the earthly realm to the universe, thus recreating a abstract of the soul's journey towards enlightenment.
3. Mandapa:	It is a porch-like building which serves as a pillared outdoor hall (pavilion) for ceremonial gatherings. It is a component of the temple complex and is utilised for religious dancing and music.

4) Pradakshina Path	A circumambulatory path used by devotees to walk around the garbhagriha. Devotees walk in clockwise direction to pay obeisance to the deity, seeking blessings, and expressing devotion
5) Amalaka :-	a stone structure that resembles a disc and is located on the top of the temple shikhara.
6) Kalasha :-	This is the temple's peak object. It is placed above Amalaka
7. Antarala:-	a transition area which is situated in between the garbhagriha and the mandap. Antarala symbolizes the journey from the material to the divine
8) Jagati:-	It is the raised platform where worshippers sit.
9) Vahana:-	It refers to the primary deity's vehicle, which is also referred to as a standard pillar or Dhvaj placed axially before the sanctum.
10) Adhishtana:-	Temples are usually built on a raised platform. It is the base platform on which temple building is built.
11) Ardha Mandap:-	It is the main entrance to the temple.
12) Maha Mandap:-	It is a great hall for people's community gatherings.
13) Urushringa :-	It is a supplementary tower that protrudes from the sides of the main shikhara tower in the Hindu temple architecture of northern India

VESARA

“Vesara means hybrid as the south Indian text kamika-agama explains that this name is derived from its mixed nature, where it is a Dravida architecture in plan, yet its shape is Nagara architecture in the details.” Aihole, Badami, and Pattadakal are home to this type of temples. Following architectural styles have a vesara architecture history.

- Chalukyan architecture
- Rashtrakuta architecture
- Hoysala temple architecture
- Vijayanagara architecture

According to some ancient historical texts, this style seems to have originated between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers in northern Karnataka. The roots of this architectural style are found in the Chalukyas of Badami (543 AD—755 AD). Some of them include Virupaksha temple, Durga temple at Aihole, Chennakeshava temple etc.



MAJOR FEATURES

FIVE FOLD FLOOR PLAN	Many Dravida temples follow a fivefold floor plan, known as panchayatana, where the main shrine is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines at the corners.
VIMANA(TOWER)	Many Dravida temples follow a fivefold floor plan, known as panchayatana, where the main shrine is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines at the corners.
SHIKHARA	It resembles a stepped pyramid. The top of the shikhara is embellished with a small structure known as the stupika.
MANDAPA (PORCH):	The hall or mandapa, has intricately carved pillars, leading to the main sanctum. The pillars are characterized by their vertical ridges and design.
GOPURAM (ENTRANCE TOWER):	Dravida temples have monumental entrance towers or gopurams, which are ornately decorated with sculptures and reliefs with scenes from Hindu mythology.

AXIAL ALIGNMENT:	Dravida temples have monumental entrance towers or gopurams, which are ornately decorated with sculptures and reliefs. with scenes from Hindu mythology.
PRAKARA (ENCLOSURE WALLS):	Temples in the Dravida style are enclosed by high walls known as prakara, creating a sacred space around the temple complex.
PILLARED CORRIDORS:	Some Dravida temples feature pillared corridors around the main sanctum, providing devotees with a circumambulatory path (pradakshina).
VYALAS AND KIRTIMUKHAS:	Some Dravida temples feature pillared corridors around the main sanctum, providing devotees with a circumambulatory path (pradakshina).

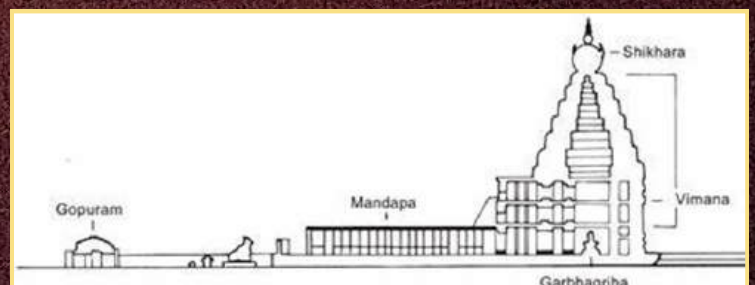
DRAVIDA

Salient features of Dravidian style that distinguish its architecture which mostly includes Southern temples like Brihadeeshwara temple, Ranganathaswamy temple, Meenakshi Amman temple etc, from the other two styles are:

Vimana - The Vimana is the soaring structure crowning the (garbhagriha). Shaped like a pyramid and square in plan, the vimana consists of several tiers stacked in a decreasing order.

Stupika – It is the large stone and is present on the last tier of the vimana. The stupika is topped with the canopy or ornament at the tip adding to the height of the vimana.

Gopurams - Gopurams are tall grand entrances peculiar to the South Indian style of temple architecture. With time Gopurams became the focal points in the later temples of South India. Temples of the later years have taller gopurams, often taller than the vimana itself.



<i>Features</i>	
Shikhara	It is usually pyramidal, similar to the Dravida style, but it may lack the stepped appearance seen in pure Dravida architecture
Mandapa (Porch):	Vesara temples frequently feature a mandapa with pillars. This is similar to Nagara style, however, the design may incorporate Dravida-style elements too.
Entrance Gopuram:	Gopuram (tower), it is generally smaller and less decorated compared to the adorned gopurams seen in Dravida temples
Axial Alignment:	Vesara temples typically follow axial alignment, like the Dravidian style, ensuring a clear line of sight to view the sanctum from the entrance.
Sculptural Ornamentation:	Intricate sculptures and carvings, can be seen similar to both northern and southern styles
Pillared Halls:	The mandapas in Vesara temples include pillared halls like that of the Nagara style, providing space for congregational activities and rituals.
Fivefold Floor Plan:	Similar to both Nagara and Dravida styles, Vesara temples may adopt a fivefold floor plan, with the main shrine surrounded by four subsidiary shrines or corners.

REGIONAL TRADITIONS AND ĀGAMA INTERPRETATIONS IN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Although Āgamaśāstra conforms to a set of principles, and these principles are universally accepted for temple edifices, as local traditions prevail, it is demonstrated that the practice in the temple plan is diverse. In India as well as in neighbouring countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka, Āgamic temples symbolize the combination of harmony in architecture and Ideosyncrasy of ideas and interpretations, with different styles prevailing in different regions but sharing the same philosophy. In South India, namely in Tamil Nadu, the Shaiva and Vaishnava temples built with the aid of the Cholas and the Pandyas followed Āgamic guidance to the later. Temples such as the Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur (Shaiva, Chola period) represent architecture that is particularly closely associated with the form of the Tamil sthapatya-veda of South India and is based on the principle of constructing a totally enclosed space. By contrast, the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam (Vaishnava) is based on the Vaikhanasa and Pancharatra Āgamas and features more complex ritual spaces and multi-layered prakāras.

To the east, the Kalinga architectural tradition is reflected in the Vaishnava Jagannath Temple in Puri, with ritual Pancharatra texts. In this context, considerations of local craft and of the wet humid climate of Odisha have determined the vertical emphasis and practical details of the temple, and the design departs from the model of the vimāna in the other south Indian temples of the region while preserving the Āgamic essence. In Nepal, the Pashupatinath Temple integrates and explains Shaiva Āgamic ritual practice complemented with

Newar pagoda architecture. The sanctum of this temple follows Āgamic rites of ritual purity, while the superstructure follows the Himalayan building style of woodwork and multi-tiered wooden roofs. Sri Lanka's Koneswaram Temple, another Shaiva site, displays Dravidian influence, but takes the temple plan model to coastal terrain and local cosmology.

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As the historian Ananda Coomaraswamy put it, such regional adaption is not an adulteration but “local sanctification”—when art and scripture sync with place. Over 85% of the ancient temples in South India are based in Āgamic prescriptions (ASI, 2021). These numbers serve to emphasize the long-continued but adaptable contribution of Āgamas, which continue to justify sacred architecture as the ‘unifying and culture reflecting’ point between indic and trans-indic spaces.

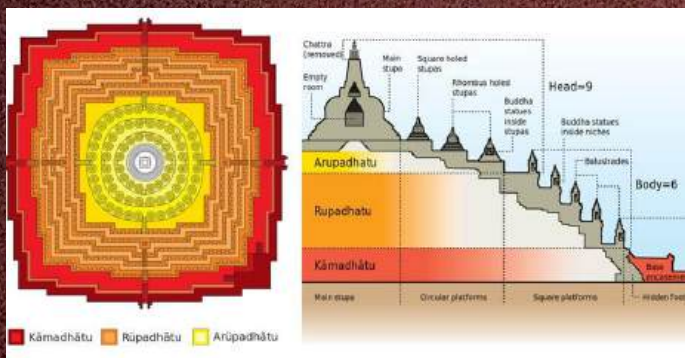
COSMIC HARMONY IN STONE: ĀGAMA ŚĀSTRA AND BUDDHIST TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Even though Buddhism and Hinduism have different spiritual roots, Buddhist temples' architecture shares striking similarities with Hindu temple design, largely due to the influence of the Āgama Śāstra. These ancient Indian texts, which offer guidance on building sacred spaces, emphasize cosmological symbolism, axial alignment, and the representation of Mount Meru, the mythological center of the universe.

Within Buddhist architecture, particularly in the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions, these concepts are expressed through the mandala. For instance, the renowned Borobudur temple in Java acts as a three-dimensional mandala, constructed with concentric terraces that symbolize spiritual advancement. Its central stupa, soaring upwards like Mount Meru, reflects the same cosmic geometry prescribed by the Āgamas.



Historian Ananda Coomaraswamy pointed out that "the stupa, much like the Hindu vimāna, is Mount Meru...the axis of the world." This symbolism is also evident in the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhi Gaya, whose spire is reminiscent of a North Indian shikhara, and whose layout combines both Āgamic and Buddhist principles. Even monastic cave complexes, such as Ajanta, follow Āgamic principles of cardinal orientation, spatial organization, and sacred geometry, artfully integrating prayer halls (chaityas) and monasteries (vihāras) in a cosmically ordered manner.



During the reign of rulers like Jayavarman VII in Cambodia, Buddhist temples such as Bayon continued this tradition, incorporating Āgamic design elements with Buddhist imagery to express both divine kingship and cosmic centrality. Despite their distinct doctrinal differences, Buddhist sacred spaces drew inspiration from shared Indian architectural ideals. As historian Benjamin Rowland observed, "In Buddhist temples, we witness the translation of the Hindu sacred order into Buddhist spiritual language," a testament to the enduring influence of the Āgama Śāstra in shaping sacred architecture across Asia.

THE SACRED PEAKS IN STONE: INDIAN INFLUENCE ON THE COMBODIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THE ĀGAMA ŚĀSTRA

The majestic temple complexes of Cambodia, especially Angkor Wat, are global symbols of ancient Southeast Asian grandeur. Yet, beneath their local aesthetic lies a profound influence from Indian temple architecture—particularly the spiritual and structural principles outlined in the Āgama Śāstra.

Central to this transmission is the symbolic significance of the mountain, especially Mount Meru, regarded as the axis of the universe in Indian cosmology. The Āgama Śāstras are a set of ancient Indian scriptures that provide detailed guidance on temple construction, deity placement,



Angkor Wat, a Hindu temple in Cambodia

rituals, and cosmological symbolism. These texts envision the temple as a sacred microcosm, centered on the garbhagrha (sanctum), and crowned by a towering shikhara or vimāna—representing Mount Meru. This mountain, considered the abode of the gods, became the architectural and spiritual nucleus of temples built across India. As Indian culture spread through trade and religious missions across Southeast Asia, these temple-building principles were adopted and transformed by Khmer architects. The Cambodian context, where mountain tops were already viewed as abodes of spirits, made this transition seamless. As noted in a research, "the temple usually stands upon a lofty terraced plinth which also symbolizes a mountain." This shared symbolism helped Indian temple design philosophies take root in Khmer

soil. Cambodian temples like Angkor Wat, Bakong, and Preah Ko are direct manifestations of these ideals. Angkor Wat's five central towers mirror Mount Meru's five peaks. Its concentric galleries symbolize mountain ranges and cosmic oceans, reflecting the Āgamic emphasis on sacred geometry and cosmic alignment. Like Indian temples, these Khmer sanctuaries are built on elevated bases, symbolizing spiritual ascent and cosmic centrality. The central shrine typically housed a sacred image—Vishnu, Shiva, or a composite deity like Harihara—representing the divine patron of the king. This divine image was seen as the king's celestial counterpart, echoing Indian royal practices. Subsidiary shrines, adorned with goddesses and royal consorts, extended this symbolism, blending Indian iconography with local styles.

Historians underscore this continuity. George Coedès wrote that “the religion of India was adopted with remarkable fidelity in Cambodia, including the cosmological model of the temple as Mount Meru.” Similarly, Jean Filliozat emphasized that Khmer temples were built in accordance with Āgamic and Silpa Śāstra prescriptions that shaped Indian temples. Yet, the Khmer did not simply copy—they localized.

Cambodian temple art adopted sensuous, rounded forms and a distinctive sandstone-based aesthetic, giving rise to a new yet familiar sacred style. These temples represent a harmonious blend of Indian cosmology and Khmer creativity. As H. G. Quaritch Wales observed, “what the Indian architects conceived in religious terms, the Khmer kings built in stone with imperial ambition.” These structures, thus, are not only places of worship—they are cosmic mountains carved in stone.

TEMPLE CITIES IN INDIA

The emergence of temple cities in India is deeply intertwined with the evolution of sacred geography, religious practices, and architectural traditions. These cities developed not merely as centers of worship but as vibrant hubs of pilgrimage, economy, and cultural life. Guided by ancient texts such as the Āgama Śāstra, Hindu

temple cities grew around monumental temples which served as both spiritual nuclei and physical anchors for urban development. While Buddhist sites like Nalanda and Bodh Gaya played important roles in earlier centuries, it was primarily Hindu temple cities that flourished into expansive urban settlements with enduring influence.

SACRED ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING

Indian temple architecture, especially in the Hindu tradition, adheres closely to the prescriptions laid out in the Āgama Śāstra, which outlines not just ritual procedures but also iconography, spatial arrangements, and directional alignments. As Dr. Stella Kramrisch asserts in *The Hindu Temple* (1946), “The Hindu temple is a planned image of the cosmos, built in stone... a channel through which divine order is drawn into the human world.” This cosmic mapping often took physical shape in the form of temples modeled after Mount Meru—the mythical axis of the universe—through towering shikharas and elevated plinths. Temples were placed at the heart of cities, with roads, markets, water tanks, and residential zones arranged concentrically or radially, reinforcing the temple's centrality in both spiritual and civic life. This layout, described in the Vāstu Purusha Mandala, mirrors the temple's own architectural configuration: sanctum (garbhagriha), halls (mandapas), gateways (gopurams), and enclosing walls, all aligning with cardinal directions.

CASE STUDY: JAGANNATH TEMPLE, PURI

The Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha, built in the 12th century under King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva, is a prime example of how a temple became the epicenter of a thriving temple city. Rising 192 feet above a square plinth, the temple follows the Kalinga architectural style, with distinct features such as the vimana (main sanctum), jagamohana (assembly hall), and nata mandapa (dancing hall).

According to K.K. Patnaik, the temple complex occupies the Nilgiri mound and is enclosed by the massive Meghanada Prachira, measuring 665 x 644 feet, with four intricately carved gates representing

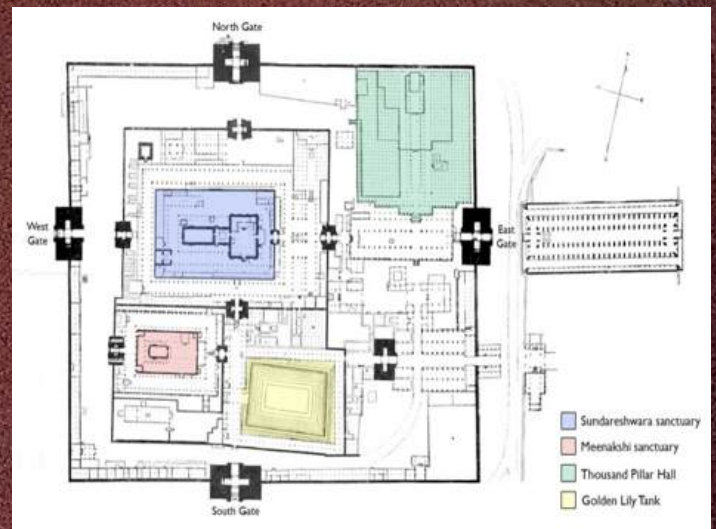
symbolic guardians: lions, elephants, horses, and celestial beings. The city of Puri evolved around this sacred nucleus. Annual rituals, especially the Rath Yatra (chariot festival), draw millions of pilgrims, reinforcing the temple's role in shaping the local economy and infrastructure. Streets and markets emerged along the main pilgrimage routes, transforming the area into a permanent settlement.



Vimana of Jagannath temple at Puri

CASE STUDY: MEENAKSHI AMMAN TEMPLE, MADURAI

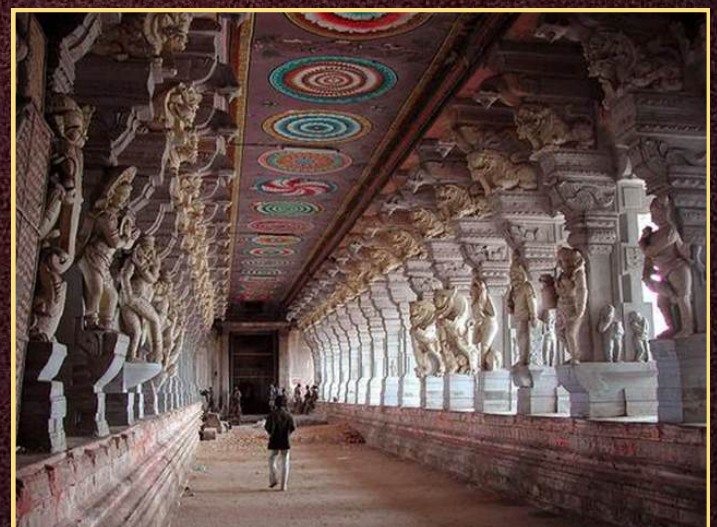
Madurai, a city brimming with history and spiritual significance, truly captures the spirit of a temple town, with the Meenakshi Amman Temple at its core. Originally envisioned by the Pandyas and later enhanced by the Nayak dynasty, this Dravidian architectural wonder is famed for its fourteen towering gopurams, the most remarkable of which is the southern tower, soaring to an impressive 170.6 feet. According to Dr. R. Rajappan, the temple "is more than just a place of worship; it's the very foundation upon which the city's distinct identity is built." The city's layout mirrors the sacred architecture of yesteryear, showcasing a concentric design, with the temple acting as its focal point. Madurai's streets are laid out in prakaras, or circular enclosures, which echo the act of pradakshina, the devotional circumambulation performed in honor of the divine.



Layout of Meenakshi Amman temple

The Aayiram Kaal Mandapam (Thousand Pillar Hall), although housing only 985 pillars, is a marvel of architectural planning, acoustics, and sculpture. The temple also features advanced understanding of acoustics, seen in the design of bells, musical pillars, and mandapams that resonate with sacred sound. Festivals like the Meenakshi Thirukalyanam attract vast crowds, making the temple a center for not only devotion but also trade, crafts, and tourism.

Guided by the Āgama Śāstra, these cities materialized as living mandalas—spiritual and civic landscapes integrated into one. With temples functioning as cosmological centers, administrative institutions, and economic engines, cities like Puri and Madurai stand as enduring symbols of how divine space was mapped onto the material world.



Thousand pillar hall, Meenakshi Amman temple

THE DUSK FOR A NEW DAWN

Indian temple architecture, a dynamic art form spanning numerous centuries, has consistently evolved, influenced by changes in religious beliefs, cultural practices, and the political landscape. Originally, temples were rather modest, constructed using wood and earth. The Mauryan era signaled the arrival of enduring stone structures, while the Gupta period, often referred to as a golden age, saw the rise of exquisitely sophisticated temples, as exemplified by the majestic Nagara style. Simultaneously, the Dravidian style flourished in the South, characterized by its towering gopurams and expansive inner sanctuaries.

The Mughal Empire, a three-century narrative, is far from a simple story. While figures such as Aurangzeb (reigned 1658–1707) are remembered for their strong-willed policies and the destruction of temples, others, including Akbar (reigned 1556–1605), Jahangir (reigned 1605–1627), and Shah Jahan (reigned 1628–1658), demonstrated a remarkable religious tolerance. Shah Jahan's capital city, Shahjahanabad, was purposefully designed with inclusive spaces, welcoming both Hindu and Jain worshipers. Jain and Khattri financiers were crucial to the Mughal economy, and the support of semi-independent Hindu Maharajas bolstered the Mughal regime. This inclusive approach was later mirrored by the British East India Company, which heavily relied on Marwari financiers and local rulers for military assistance.

MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE AND THE ECHOES OF PLURALISM

Mughal emperors, particularly those from the early and late periods, displayed a deep appreciation for India's varied cultures. Akbar's chronicler, Abul Fazl, in his comprehensive work, **Ain-i-Akbari**, meticulously documented various Hindu practices and temples with great admiration, drawing parallels between Hindu and Islamic rituals. He wrote of a grand temple in Banaras, once filled with pilgrims, much like Muslims circumambulating the Kaaba.

This temple, destroyed by a 12th-century invader, served as a stark contrast to the tolerance exhibited by Mughal rulers. This spirit of cultural fusion and pluralism was most evident during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, before it was overshadowed by Aurangzeb's stringent policies.

TEMPLES AND PILGRIMAGE: A FUSION OF FAITH AND POWER

Mughal interventions at important pilgrimage sites, such as Banaras and Brindavan, reflected both political strategy and spiritual aims. The Vishwesvar temple in Banaras, supported by the Mughal noble Todarmal and his mentor Narayan Bhatt around 1590, was a Shaiva shrine that incorporated Mughal design elements like intersecting vaults and pointed arches with a traditional carved stone exterior. Unfortunately, Aurangzeb had this temple demolished in 1669. Likewise, the Bindu Madhav temple in Banaras, managed by the Kachhawaha, met the same fate, replaced by the Dharhara mosque. Its interior, as described by the European traveler Tavernier, was notable for its impressive cruciform plan. In Brindavan, the Govind Dev temple integrated jharokhas—a symbol of Mughal authority—into its design, showcasing a blending of artistic influences.

SHAHJAHANABAD: VESTIGES OF A SHARED AESTHETIC

Shahjahanabad, now known as Old Delhi, still houses remnants of Mughal-era temples that reveal shared aesthetics and cultural unity. An example is the Ghanteswar Mahadev Shivalaya, located in Katra Neel—once the heart of the Shaivite community. Erected during the reign of Bahadur Shah Zafar (reigned 1837–1857), this temple is a rare example of late Mughal patronage. Intriguingly, these temples often lacked soaring **shikharas**; instead, they were adorned with lotus domes—a signature feature of Mughal architecture. The shivalayas of this period were nestled within Mughal-style pavilions, surrounded by gardens, havelis, and dharamshalas, most of which have been lost due to relentless urban development.



Jharokha (projecting window), Govind Dev temple, Brindavan

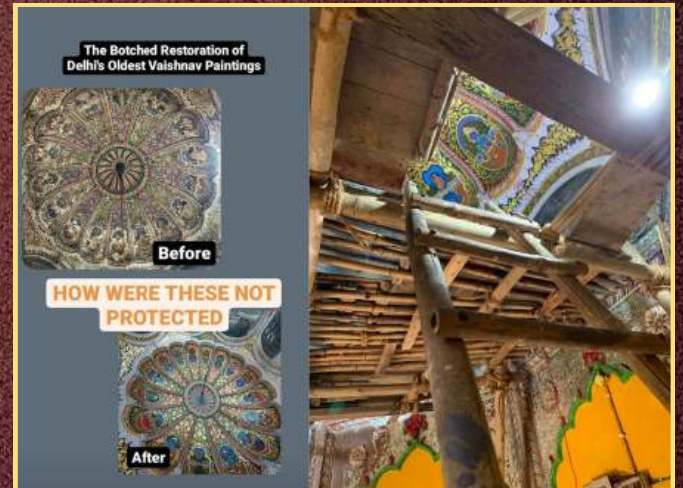


Temple of Vishveshvar, Benaras

NEGLECT AND LOSS OF HERITAGE

Following the British takeover of Delhi in 1857, significant portions of Shahjahanabad were demolished. The Red Fort, a former emblem of imperial dominance, now appears as a mere reflection of its past splendor. Curiously, the surviving interiors of the Jain temples provide a window into the Delhi of the Mughal period. Regrettably, these remarkable architectural gems are under threat. Temples such as the one at Sant Charan Dasji ki Bagichi, built during Muhammad Shah's rule (1719–1748), have suffered damage due to ill-considered restoration endeavors. The Bagichi, for instance, once featured stunning

frescoes depicting Vaishnav life, which have since been painted over, leading to the obliteration of a singular historical element. Although heritage advocates on social media have tried to draw attention to the situation, the public is largely unaware, with many people expressing astonishment at the discovery of historic temples within Delhi.



Artworks depicting the Vaishnava life in Charan Das ki Baghichi that have now been painted over.

A FORGOTTEN LEGACY

The state of these old buildings is, frankly, quite sad; most aren't even recognized as heritage sites by the Archaeological Survey of India. A great many important temples have been so changed that they're barely recognizable. Take the Jhajarwala Shivalaya in Chandni Chowk, once celebrated for its image of a black Lord Krishna; now, it's just a small part of the huge ISKCON temple. Even the Ghanteswar Temple is wrapped up in local stories, with locals saying its shivling was carved from a rock brought there by the Pandavas. These monuments mean more than just religion—they're like architectural records of mixed traditions. They challenge rigid historical narratives and stand as proof of those "twilight" areas of Indian history that bring people together.



Katra neel, Ghanteshwar Mahadev Shivalaya

The architectural legacy of this era is complex. It reflects not only religious tension but also resilience, adaptation, and an undercurrent of continuity. Thus, while Aurangzeb's rule brought undeniable strain, temple architecture survived and evolved, carrying forward both ancient traditions and Mughal influences.

CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT - THE NEW DAWN:

1. RAM MANDIR, AYODHYA:

Recently inaugurated, this temple has been built in the famous Nagara temple architecture.



2. BAPS TEMPLES:

BAPS temples, particularly those like the Akshardham Temple in Delhi and the Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar, feature intricate carvings, sculptural work, and traditional domes, reflecting ancient Vastu Shastra principles.



An image of Lord Krishna at Jhajarwala Mandir, now known as ISKON temple

3. ISKON TEMPLE, BENGALURU

This stone temple is constructed as per traditional Shilpa shastras (designs as mentioned in scriptures) in the Dravidian style of architecture. The design and aesthetics, including the seven doors to the sanctum, are inspired by the Sri Venkateshwara Swamy Temple in Tirumala.



CONCLUSION

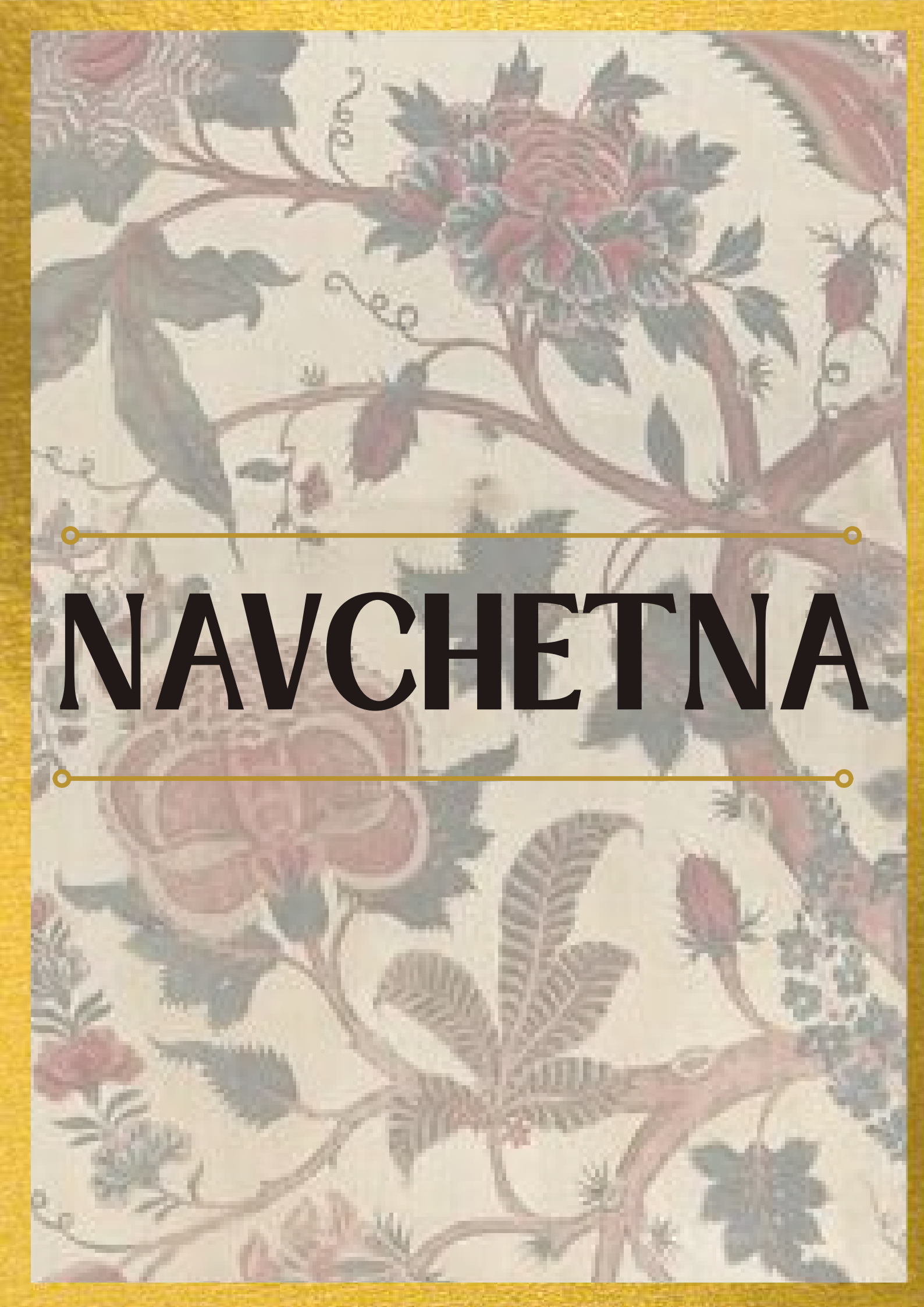
In a nutshell, we can say that Agama Shastra is a collection of ideas that lays down the rules for temple architecture, temple worship, spirituality and rituals. Agama shastra has not only influences temple architecture of Indian temple but also the temple architecture of neighbouring countries of India like Nepal and Sri Lanka. It has not influenced only the Hindy temple architecture but also the Buddhist temple architecture and of temples even located in Java, Cambodia etc. The case studies like influence of Agama Shastra on temple architechure of Cambodia has also been

explained. The research paper has covered the principles for temple construction as prescribed in the Agamashastra and also the three major types and features of Temple architecture i.e. Nagara, Dravida and Vesara. Guided by the Āgama Śāstra, Hindu temple cities grew around monumental temples which served as both spiritual nuclei and physical anchors for urban development. Even the temples built during the Mughal reign and influence of Mughal Architecture on them which signifies Religious Pluralism is also included. Also, these temples suffered from the invaders, some Mughals like Aurangzeb and the British who were keen to spread Christianity and do intentional desacralization in our country full of religious diversity. Although many temples were damaged and still some are neglected, the legacy of temple architecture as prescribed in Agamashastra is reflected in the temples built in the contemporary times like the BAPS temple made in UAE, Akshardham, ISKON, most recently built Ram Mandir at Ayodhya etc. Thus, being of the period around that of the Vedas, the Agamashastra is still a very important living ancient text which has been shaping the temple architecture all around the world.

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NAVCHETNA

ANCIENT INDIAN CITY LIFE AND RURAL COMPLEX: THE STUDY, CRITIC AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

HARSH TOMAR



“What if everything that occurred in past, is influenced by the future?”, this quote may not be making sense right now but at the end of this paper, this will one of the major outcomes which would absolutely be making sense. Cities is not a phenomenon which occurs overnight, yet it emerged out of an evolutionary procedure. In this paper, we are depicting dichotomy between urban and rural life but urban settlement has only emerged from the rural one. There is a catch, that not all the rural settlements had transformed into urban ones.

Ancient India, a land of rich cultural heritage and historical significance, witnessed the flourishing of both urban centres and rural settlements. We are going to delve into the intricate relationship between ancient Indian city life and the rural

complex, exploring their unique characteristics, interdependencies, and evolution over time. By examining archaeological evidence, literary sources, and comparative analyses, this study aims to shed light on the social, economic, and political dynamics that shaped these distinct yet interconnected spheres of ancient Indian society. Through a critical lens, we will unravel the complexities of urban-rural interactions, challenging conventional narratives and offering fresh perspectives on the multifaceted nature of ancient Indian civilization.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ‘BASICS’

The definition of Villages and cities have also been following the process of evolution. . Grāma in the Rigveda has been interpreted as two types:

●Rigveda 10.62.10:

"grāmāṇām vīrāṇām adhvaṛeṣu"

This verse speaks of the involvement of the community or group (grāma), which is settled, perform sacrifices or rituals.

●Rigveda 6.45.31:

"anūṣata grāmam yuvānam anuṣṭutam"

Here, grāma is associated with a moving or advancing group, possibly reflecting the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Vedic people where the community could also imply a mobile tribal unit.

Samarangana Sutradhara (11th-century poetic treatise on classical Indian architecture), The unit of the national planning, according to this text is a village. It also mentions that, the planning of ancient Indian Villages reflects a broader national vision. Despite India's vast size and diverse regions, its strong cultural and religious unity fostered a sense of cohesive national identity, evident in the approach to planning under rulers like Pṛthu and architects like Viśvakarmā. This national planning, particularly relevant for a subcontinent like India, involved dividing the country into three distinct regions – large, medium, and small – a classification that likely influenced the character and organization of individual

involved dividing the country into three distinct regions – large, medium, and small – a classification that likely influenced the character and organization of individual settlements within each region.

“Cities are more than just large, densely populated settlements. Cities are characterized by their complex social, economic, and political structures. They serve as hubs for administration, trade, craft production, and cultural activities, often supporting a diverse population with specialized roles.”- Kenoyer, J. M. (1998). *Ancient cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*. Oxford University Press.

The first known cities emerged around 5000 years ago in the Great Indus Valley Civilization, such as Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro etc.

ANCIENT TOWN PLANNING

Before We dive into the complexities of different phased village and city life, we must also sight what has been documented in different scriptures about how the planning of an area was being executed according to the various basis. Ancient Indian treatises, including the Vedas, Puranas, Artha Sastra, and Sukra Nitisara, meticulously delineate town planning principles grounded in Vastu Shastra. These texts categorized settlements according to their function, encompassing jana (populace), nagara (urban center), grama (rural village), kheta (agrarian settlement), and durga (fortified stronghold), each subject to specific regulatory guidelines. The Vastu Purusha Mandala, a diagram predicated on cosmic principles, served as a cornerstone of architectural design, dictating the spatial arrangement and dimensional attributes of edifices.

Village layouts typically conformed to square or rectangular configurations (e.g., Chaturshranga or Ayataakara formations), circumscribed by defensive walls and ditches. The grama frequently featured a central shrine consecrated to the village deity, a reservoir for water procurement, and a communal hall (sabha) for assemblies. Emphasis was placed on agricultural pursuits, with designated areas allocated for arable land and pastures. Sustaining the livelihoods of the laboring populace (cultivators, artisans) was paramount, and infrastructure such as dams (e.g., the Sudarsana lake, as documented in inscriptions) and gardens were provisioned.

The Artha Sastra prescribes specific proportional allocations of land contingent upon caste and occupational status.

Urban planning prioritized central locations proximate to perennial water sources (rivers, lakes), with layouts varying in accordance with topographical characteristics. Cities such as Mohenjo-daro and Harappa (while pre-Vedic, they exemplify sophisticated planning) exhibit grid-like street patterns, advanced drainage systems, and citadels for defensive purposes. Discrete marketplaces (apana) for diverse commodities were indispensable. Protective ramparts and moats of specified dimensions, as detailed in texts like the Manasara, were crucial. A meticulously planned network of thoroughfares, comprising principal avenues and subsidiary lanes, facilitated efficient circulation. Provisions for urban expansion, such as the relocation of surplus population to nascent settlements (nagara extensions), were also contemplated. The Sukra Nitisara explicates the hierarchy of municipal officials and their respective roles. Intercity connectivity, facilitated by well-maintained thoroughfares and commercial routes, was significant. Tax exemptions for migrants in newly established settlements fostered sustainable urban development, as corroborated by historical accounts of recently founded cities.



Both village and city planning reflected prevailing religious tenets. Temples, dedicated to divinities such as Indra, Agni, or Varuna, served as focal points. Residential precincts were frequently stratified by caste (e.g., Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras), mirroring the social hierarchy. The Manusmriti and other texts delineate the social

structure and associated spatial arrangements.

Security considerations were paramount. City walls, gateways (gopura), and moats constituted essential features. Fortresses (durga), often strategically positioned, furnished supplementary protection. The Artha Sastra devotes considerable attention to fort design, encompassing the emplacement of ramparts, towers, and armories. The concept of Kosha (treasury) and its secure emplacement within the city was also critical.

Ancient Indian texts, such as the Manasara Shilpa Shastra, provide detailed descriptions of settlement plans. These texts categorize ancient towns based on size, shape, and purpose.

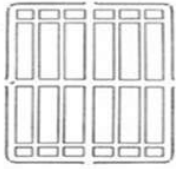
Categorization by Size:

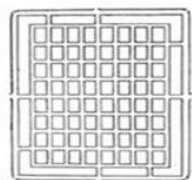
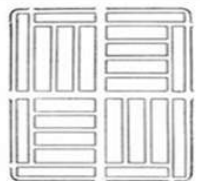
- Rajdhani: The king's capital city.
- Sakhanagra: A general term encompassing all towns except a Pura. This category includes various sizes of settlements.
- Karvata: A smaller town.
- Nigma: Smaller than a Karvata.
- Grama: Smaller than a Nigma (typically a village).
- Special Towns:
 - Pattana: A secondary or alternate residence/town, often used by royalty or important figures.
 - Putabhedana: Similar to a Pattana but with the added function of being a significant commercial center.

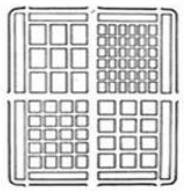
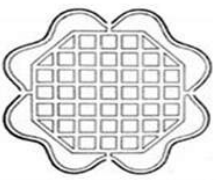
Categorization by Shape and Purpose:

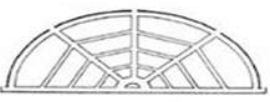
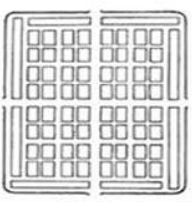
Ancient Indian texts describe various town layouts, each with a specific name and characteristics:

- Dandaka: Elongated rectangle or oval, often along trade routes (e.g., Ujjain).
- Nandyavarta: Circular or spiral, with streets radiating from a central point (e.g., Madurai).
- Sarvatobhadra: Square or rectangular grid pattern (e.g., Pataliputra).
- Swastika: Pattern resembling the swastika symbol, with streets at right angles (e.g., Mohenjo-daro).
- Prastara: Linear layout, with parallel streets (e.g., Varanasi).
- Padmaka: Circular or semi-circular, lotus-shaped, with a central plaza or temple (e.g., Hampi).
- Karmuka: Triangular or wedge-shaped, tapering to a point (e.g., Thanjavur).
- Chaturmukha: Quadrilateral or square grid pattern (e.g., Udaipur)

DANDAKA	NANDYAVARTA
	
• Literally means a phalanx or A staff. • It is usually a rectangular or square. • Its streets are straight and cross each other At right angles. • No. Of streets vary from one to five running Parallel to each other. • Streets at extremes have single row of Houses and streets at center are lined with Double row of houses. • Town offices and panchayats are located in The eastern portion of the town. • This type of town is considered auspicious For brahmins. It may contain 12,24,50,108,or 300 brahmin families.	• It may be square or oblong. • It is divided in 4 main vitthis. • The town has four large streets along the sides. • This type of layout is like a mystic figure Nandyavarta. • There can be three. Five or seven sets of such Streets, with a row of houses on each side. • The lanes which are traverse between the main Roads should have no houses. • Vitthis is a streets which is lined with houses. • Marga is a streets which is devoid of any Houses. • Small roads are at interval of six or seven rajjus (1 rajju = 10 dandas = 60 feet). • Usually streets are 3,4 or 5 dandas wide

SARVATOBHADRA	SWASTIKA
	
• It is oblong or square and divided into interlineal chambers. • In center temple dedicated to brahma, vishnu and shiva is Located. • No. Of car streets varies form one to five with a boulevard going Around the village. • Pavillions, rest houses, colleges halls at several corners. • Town is secured by a wall and a ditch with four large Gates on the sides and many gates at corners. • Drapers and weavers have their quarters in between West and the south west. • Blacksmiths are to be quartered between varuna and vayu And further opposite to them are fishermen and the Butchers. • Physicians are to assigned between vayu and soma. • By the side of eastern wall temple of chamunda is Erected. • Huts of chandalas and outcastes in the further outer Proximity. • Tanks and reservoirs should be constructed either in South or in the intermediate quaters.	- Based on mystic figure Swastika. • There are two streets passing through Center. • Traversing streets are planted in clock Wise direction. • Ramparts defend the village and a ditch is to enclose these rampart. • There are eight gates . • kings palace should be erected in the Four cardinal direction, in the cell of Aryama or others. • Temple at the center. • The bhuddhist temple should be established on the plot of vayu and jains temple in south-west in the cell of niri • Temple of durga and ganesh in four Directions. • The outer most road is lined with single row of houses while other streets have Double row of houses

PRASTARA	PADMKA
	
- Literally it means a Village resembling a couch • This town is either square or oblong. • Space is divided into 4, 9, or 16 wards by A network of streets. • These streets vary from 6,7, 8, 9, or 11 Dandas. • In wards roads are planted in chess board System. But they are not divide in equal No of plots. • Division was according to degree of Rank or wealth of the person. • The village is enclosed walls and ditches With four principal gates on south and Subsidiary ones in the corners.	- Mayamata says There are five variety of this village. • Its length and breadth are made Equal while the enclosing walls are Circular or it can be quadrangular, Hexagonal, or octagonal. • The divide edifice or council house Should be at the center. • Round about this plot should be Planted streets no. Four to eight and They are line with houses. • There should be gates in four Cardinal directions.

KARMUKHA	CHATURMUKHA
	
Literally means a bow. • Its shape is semi circular or semi Elliptical, like a bow. • This type of plan is used at sea shore. • Towns like pattana, kheta, or khavarta Are planned in this manner. • Pattana has preponderance of viasyas. • Kheta is generally inhabited by traders And laborers. • It has two car streets and one principal streets. • If bow faces west then one car streets runs from south to east and other from north to East and principal street runs from west to east and other runs from north to south. • No. Of traverse streets can be from one to five • Houses range on both side of them. • It may have desirable no. Of gates and circumvallation is optional.	It is square or oblong in shape lying east-west. • There are four car streets on four sides. • Two large streets crossing at right angles in the Center dividing the whole site into four blocks or Wards. • Four principal gates are raised placed on the Terminus of two highways and no. Of supplementary Gates at corner. • Each ward is planted with four smaller roads Crossed by same no. Of them. • The south eastern ward is allotted for brahmins. • South- western for ruling class. • North- eastern and north- western to traders. • Sudras or artisans and labor class are relegated to The extreme borders.

The Anguttara Nikaya enlists 16 large territorial polities (solasamahajanapadas):-

MAHAJANAPADA	CAPITAL
1. KASHI	VARANASI
2. KOSALA	SRAVASTI
3. ANGA	CHAMPA
4. MAGADHA	• RAJAGRIHA-GIRIVRAJA (FIRST CAPITAL) • PATALIPUTRA (LATER CAPITAL)
5. VRIJI	VAISHALI
6. MALLA	PAVA
7. CHEDI	SUKTIMATI
8. VATSA	KAUSAMBI
9. MATSYA	VAIRAT
10.SURASENA	MATHURA
11.KURU	HASTINAPURA
12.PANCHALA	I. AHICHHATRA II. KAMPILYA
13.ASMAKA	GOVARDHANA
14.AVANTI	I. UJJAYINI II. MAHISMATI
15.GANDHARA	TAKSHASHILA
16.KHAMBOJA	-

	DANDAKA	SWASTIKA	PADMAKA	NADVAVARTA	PRASTARA	CHATURMUKHA	KARMUKHA	SARVATOBHADRA
Form	Square Oblong	Swastik	Circular Octagonal/	Square Circular	Square Oblong	Square oblong	Bow shape	Square oblong
Street Pattern	Straight, Intersect at Right angle	2 streets Passing Through Centre	Streets Aligned with The houses	Streets run Parallel to the centre	4 cardinal Streets and Supplement-ary streets	4 cardinal Streets and Supplement-ary streets	Main street N-s or e-w & Cross street at right Angle	Four street Around the Town and inner Streets
Plans Suitable For	Villages	Villages And town	Towns with No scope of Expansion	Commonly For village	Villages and Town	Largest towns to smallest Village	Suitable for Seashore or River front	Larger villages And towns
Division Of Blocks	Blocks with Lengths Twice or Thrice of Width	Rectangular Plots	Rectangular	Rectangular	Different Block size for Varied Classes	Modular Blocks	Quadrangula r Plots	Rectangular
City Wall and Moats	Not found	Rampart Wall with Water moat	Fortified in All sides	Rampart wall	May have Fortification	Not found	Rampart wall With water. Moat	City wall and a Ditch
Town Gates	Four gates in four Direction	Eight gates	Four gates in Four Direction	Four Gates	Four main Gate and Other gates At corners	Four main Gate and Other gates At corners	May have Desirable no. Of Gates	Four main gate & many gates At corners
Temples	Temples Found in Various Locations	Temple at The centre And four Direction	Temple at the Centre	Temple at the Centre	Temple at the Centre	Temple always At the centre	Temple found in Suitable Location	Temple at the Centre

MAGADH TIME

The Ganga Valley, considered the heart of northern India, experienced the intricate socio-economic and cultural dynamics linked to urbanization. The period between 600 and 300 BCE is recognized as the second phase of urbanization in Indian history. But there were also some areas which were still in village or rural form.

From the 6th century BCE onward, the political landscape of northern India became more defined, with rulers and spiritual leaders mentioned in various literary traditions emerging as identifiable historical figures. During the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, state polities and societies took shape across a region spanning from Gandhara in the northwest to Anga in the east, also extending into the Malwa region.

I would like to explain the urban and rural facets of one of the most popular Mahajan pada named Magadha. The most striking feature of the evolving material life in northern India was the emergence of urban centers. Nearly a millennium after the decline of Harappan urbanism, cities began to reappear in the subcontinent, marking the second wave of urbanization. Notably, from the 6th century BCE onward, there was a significant shift in the regions where these cities emerged. Unlike the Harappan period, the urban centers of this second urbanization were predominantly situated in the Ganga Valley, an area that had not previously experienced urban growth during the Harappan era. The initial Magadha kingdom encompassed the modern-day Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar and boasted several important urban centers throughout its history. Rajagriha, initially called Girivrija, was strategically situated amidst five hills, providing natural defenses. It became the first capital of Magadh under Bimbisara, marking the beginning of Magadh's political rise. The city also held religious significance as the venue for the First Buddhist Council after the Buddha's death. Its cyclopean walls still stand, representing early construction skills.

Pataliputra succeeded Rajagriha as the capital, evolving from a fort built by Ajatashatru into a large city under Udayin. Its location at the confluence of the Ganges, Gandhaka, and Son rivers was advantageous for trade and communication. Pataliputra served as the capital for the Nanda, Maurya, Shunga, and Pala empires, highlighting its enduring political and administrative importance. The Greek ambassador Megasthenes described it as a vast and prosperous center with efficient governance. It was also a major hub for trade and a significant Buddhist center with numerous monasteries. Vaishali was unique as the capital of the Vajjika League, recognized as an early republic. It holds religious significance as the birthplace of Lord Mahavira (Jainism) and the site where the Buddha delivered his final sermon and the Second Buddhist Council was held. Vaishali was later annexed by Magadh under Ajatashatru. Beyond these capitals, other cities played crucial roles. Gaya was a major pilgrimage site for ancestor rituals like Pind daan. Nearby Bodh Gaya is revered as the place where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment. Nalanda, near Rajagriha, was home to an ancient university, signifying Magadh's intellectual prominence. Champa became a significant trading center after its conquest by Bimbisara, and Bihar-sharif was another notable town. These diverse urban centers demonstrate the multifaceted religious, cultural, and intellectual significance of the Magadh region.

SOCIAL IN CITIES

The social structure of Magadh cities was largely defined by the Varna system, a hierarchical order that included Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. This system dictated social status and occupations, with Shudras often involved in manual labor like agriculture and crafts, and sometimes subjected to slavery. Beyond this, a distinct group of untouchables emerged, positioned outside the Varna framework and relegated to the fringes of society. They were tasked with menial jobs, often lived separately, and relied on hunting and gathering. Notably, in the "Greater Magadha" region, there was a deviation from strict Vedic norms, where Kshatriyas were sometimes considered higher in status than Brahmanas, indicating some social flexibility or regional differences in the application of the Varna system.

These social categories and their variations suggest a society undergoing change and influenced by local customs.

Family and kinship were fundamental to Magadhan society, deeply connected to the caste system and patriarchal norms. There was a strong preference for sons over daughters due to the perceived need for male heirs to continue the lineage and perform necessary funerary rituals, highlighting a lower social value placed on women. Extended families based on the male line (Kula) and broader networks of relatives (Natakas, Nati, and Nati-Kulani) played significant roles in social life and within the framework of the caste system. The emphasis on lineage and patriarchal structures heavily influenced social organization and individual roles within the community.

The status of women in Magadh cities presents a complex picture. While generally holding a subordinate position within the patriarchal structure, potentially reinforced by the practice of marrying within one's caste, there are indications of a more nuanced reality. During the Mauryan period, some accounts suggest that women held high positions and even served as the King's personal bodyguards, suggesting possibilities for female agency and influence. Furthermore, in certain periods, women were reportedly allowed to divorce or remarry, indicating some legal and social flexibility. The example of Amrapali, a prominent royal courtesan in Vaishali who later became a Buddhist nun, also suggests that women could achieve social recognition or pursue alternative paths outside traditional domestic roles. These varied accounts suggest that while patriarchal norms were dominant, the social roles and status of women in Magadh cities were not uniformly restrictive.

The Greek historian Megasthenes offered valuable insights into Magadhan society, describing its division into seven hereditary occupational groups with restrictions on marriage between them. He noted a general simplicity in daily life, with men typically wearing three pieces of unstitched cloth. However, wealth was evident in the attire of some, with the affluent favoring colored garments adorned with gold and precious stones and using sunshades

carried by attendants. Interestingly, Megasthenes also reported a remarkably low crime rate in Pataliputra during the Mauryan period, with people leaving their houses unguarded, suggesting an effective system of social order and governance. He also mentioned that injuries to artisans were severely punished, especially those causing loss of limbs or eyes.

The emergence and treatment of untouchables represent a significant aspect of social inequality in ancient Magadh. This marginalized group, positioned below the Shudras, lived outside the main settlements, often relying on hunting and gathering for survival and assigned to perform menial and ritually "polluting" tasks such as animal slaughter and leatherworking. They faced severe social discrimination, being denied access to public resources like wells and temples. Their exclusion from mainstream society highlights the rigid and discriminatory nature of the social hierarchy in ancient Magadh.

ECONOMIC

The geographical location of Magadh within the Gangetic valley provided an exceptionally fertile alluvial plain, ideally suited for supporting intensive agricultural practices. The consistent deposition of nutrient-rich silt from the Ganges and Son rivers created land that was highly productive, allowing for substantial agricultural yields. This inherent fertility was a primary driver of Magadh's economic strength, enabling the production of surplus food that sustained a large population, including the inhabitants of its burgeoning urban centers. Beyond mere sustenance, this agricultural abundance formed the bedrock for other economic activities and directly contributed to the power of the Magadhan state and its military. The high productivity of the land allowed for a significant portion of the population to engage in non-agricultural pursuits, fostering specialization and the growth of urban centers. Furthermore, the surplus produce served as a crucial base for taxation, providing the state with the necessary resources for its various functions.

A well-established system of land taxation (Bhaga), primarily through the collection of a share of the agricultural produce known as Bhaga, formed the backbone of the Magadhan state's revenue. Typically,

the state levied a tax of one-fourth or one-sixth of the produced grain. This systematic collection of land tax provided the Magadhan rulers with a consistent and substantial source of income, which was essential for financing the administrative machinery, maintaining a large and powerful army, and investing in the development of public infrastructure. The predictable nature of this revenue stream allowed the state to effectively plan and execute its various functions, contributing significantly to the overall stability and economic prosperity of the empire.

In addition to the land tax collected from privately cultivated lands, the Magadhan state directly managed certain lands known as Sita or crown lands. These lands were under the supervision of an official called Sitadhyaksa, whose responsibility was to oversee their cultivation and ensure the efficient production of agricultural goods. The produce from these crown lands flowed directly into the royal treasury, providing an additional and guaranteed source of revenue for the state, independent of the regular land tax. This direct management allowed the rulers to have greater control over resources and likely supported the royal household and specific state-sponsored projects, further bolstering the financial strength of the Magadhan Empire. Beyond land tax, the Magadh Empire employed other forms of taxation to generate revenue from different sectors of the economy. Pindakara was a tax assessed on groups of villages, indicating a collective responsibility for revenue payment. Cash taxes, known as Bali and Hiranaya, were also collected, likely on specific types of crops or transactions. Query. Additionally, tolls (Shaulkika) were imposed on merchandise, reflecting the importance of trade to the state's finances. Query. This diversified taxation system allowed the empire to draw revenue from various economic activities, ensuring a more stable financial foundation.

Tax Name	Description	Sector/Activity Taxed
Bhaga	Share of agricultural produce (1/4 or 1/6)	Agriculture (land)
Pindakara	Tax assessed on groups of villages	Village communities
Bali	Cash tax	Peasants, potentially specific crops
Hiranaya	Cash tax	Peasants, potentially specific crops
Shaulkika	Tolls imposed on merchandise	Trade and commerce
Vishti	Forced labor	Labor (primarily Vaishya and Shudra)

POLITICAL

The political landscape of Magadh saw the rise and fall of several dynasties, each leaving its mark on the kingdom's development. The Brihadratha dynasty is recognized as the earliest to rule Magadh. Following them, the Haryanka dynasty, featuring prominent rulers like Bimbisara, Ajatashatru, and Udayin, initiated Magadh's expansion and strengthened its foundation. Bimbisara employed strategies like matrimonial alliances, diplomacy with powerful neighbors, and conquest of weaker ones to expand his territory. Rajagriha was the initial capital under this dynasty, chosen for its natural defenses, but Udayin later shifted the capital to Pataliputra due to its central location advantageous for controlling the growing empire. The Shishunaga dynasty continued the expansion, notably defeating Avanti and briefly moving the capital to Vaishali before it was eventually returned to Pataliputra. The Nanda dynasty, under rulers such as Mahapadma Nanda and Dhana Nanda, established a vast and powerful empire with a large army; Mahapadma Nanda is even considered by some as India's "first historical emperor" due to his extensive conquests. The Maurya dynasty, founded by Chandragupta Maurya, marked the peak of Magadh's power, unifying a large part of the Indian subcontinent under its rule from Pataliputra. This progression of dynasties demonstrates a trend towards greater centralization and territorial expansion, with the choice of capital reflecting strategic and administrative needs. Several key rulers significantly influenced Magadh's political journey. Bimbisara is famous for his strategic matrimonial alliances, expansionist military policies, and establishing Magadh's first standing army. His

son, Ajatashatru, was known for his aggressive military campaigns, including the long conquest of Vaishali, and for fortifying Rajagriha; he also utilized advanced weapons like the Mahashilakantaka and Rathamusala. Udayin's relocation of the capital to Pataliputra was a crucial administrative and strategic decision. Mahapadma Nanda's creation of a large empire and his reputation as a powerful ruler left a lasting impact. Chandragupta Maurya, guided by Chanakya, successfully overthrew the Nandas and founded the Mauryan Empire, ushering in an era of unified rule. Ashoka, Chandragupta's grandson, is renowned for his adoption of Buddhism and his subsequent policies promoting peace and social welfare (Dhamma), which significantly shaped the empire's social and political landscape. The ambitions, strategic skills, and administrative abilities of these individual rulers were vital to Magadh's rise to prominence. Magadh's governance was characterized by a centralized monarchy where the king held ultimate authority, often supported by a council of ministers known as the Mantriparishad. These ministers, or Mantris, handled various administrative tasks, including revenue collection. The empire was divided into provinces, each governed by viceroys or provincial governors responsible for maintaining order and implementing imperial policies. Higher officials, often called Mahamatras or Amatyas, held multiple important government roles and were frequently recruited from the Brahmana class, wielding considerable authority. At the local level, the village (Grama) was the basic administrative unit, headed by local chiefs called Gramikas. Under the Mauryas, a highly organized bureaucracy was established, guided by the principles of the Arthashastra, which provided detailed instructions on managing revenue, trade, and other resources. This sophisticated administrative structure, with its clear hierarchy and defined roles, ensured efficient governance and revenue collection across the vast empire

MAGADH VILLAGES

Life in the Villages of the Magadh Empire: A Social, Economic, and Political Analysis

The Magadh Empire, flourishing in the fertile plains of what is now Bihar, rose to prominence as one of the most significant Mahajanapadas (great kingdoms) of ancient India, particularly between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE . The understanding of daily existence within its villages is paramount, as these rural settlements constituted the fundamental social, economic, and political units of the empire . This report endeavors to provide a comprehensive analysis of the social hierarchy, economic activities, and political organization that characterized village life in the Magadh Empire. It is crucial to acknowledge that the provided research material primarily pertains to the Vijayanagara Empire, which existed much later in South India. Therefore, while this analysis will incorporate available information specific to the Magadh Empire, it will also draw upon broader trends and insights from ancient Indian history, with these inferences being explicitly noted where direct data is limited.

Social Structure in Magadh Villages

The social structure of Magadh villages was largely defined by the Varna system, a hierarchical framework that profoundly influenced the lives of its inhabitants . This system, which had its origins in the Vedic period , categorized society into four primary classes: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and agriculturalists), and Shudras (laborers and artisans) . Within Magadh villages, this structure dictated social standing, occupational choices, and the nature of interactions between different groups . While typical villages comprised people from various castes, the social roles and expectations were likely aligned with the traditional Varna framework . Furthermore, distinctions within the Shudra Varna, such as Nirvasita (living within the community) and Anirvasita (living outside) Shudras , suggest a nuanced social stratification extending beyond a simple four-tiered model, potentially influencing access to resources and community inclusion. The mention of "detested peoples" such as the Angas,

Gandharis, and Mujavats hints at a social landscape that extended beyond the Varna system, encompassing groups who may have faced marginalization or social exclusion within or around Magadha's rural settlements.

Family and kinship formed the bedrock of social life in Magadh villages . Strong kinship ties fostered social cohesion, providing essential mutual support networks and a framework for inheritance and social obligations . Extended and patrilineal families, referred to as Kula , were common, shaping household dynamics and the broader organization of the village community . The profound significance of these familial bonds is underscored by instances where even monastic norms were adapted to allow monks to maintain their kinship ties , illustrating the deeply ingrained nature of family in the social and cultural fabric of the Magadh region.

The role and status of women in Magadh villages were generally subordinate within the prevailing patriarchal social structure . Similar to the conditions observed in later periods , women's roles were likely primarily confined to the domestic sphere and familial responsibilities . The endogamous nature of the caste system further influenced their status, potentially limiting their opportunities and social mobility within the village society .

Despite the social hierarchy imposed by the Varna system, interactions between different castes and communities likely occurred within Magadh villages . Religious and cultural festivals, which were significant aspects of ancient Indian life , would have provided crucial opportunities for community gatherings and interactions, especially given the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in the Magadh region . The characterization of the Magadha people as "realistic and worldly" suggests a pragmatic approach to life, potentially fostering community cooperation and a focus on collective well-being within the villages.

Economic Activities in Magadh Villages

Agriculture formed the economic backbone of Magadh villages, with the fertile land of the Gangetic plains supporting a thriving agricultural sector . The primary crops cultivated included rice, barley, pulses, millets, cotton, and sugarcane .

Advanced agricultural practices such as paddy transplantation and the adoption of the iron ploughshare significantly increased agricultural yields , contributing to the region's economic prosperity . The presence of different classes of landowners, namely Grihapatis (rich landlords) and Kassakas/Krishakas (smaller landowners) , indicates a degree of economic stratification within the village's agricultural community.

Efficient water management through irrigation was crucial for the success of agriculture in Magadh villages . Traditional irrigation systems like Ahars (earthen storage structures) and Pynes (diversion channels) were likely employed to leverage the water resources of the region's rivers . These systems, dating back to the Mauryan era, diverted floodwaters for storage and irrigation . Rulers also played a role in developing and maintaining irrigation infrastructure, such as canals , demonstrating a state-supported effort to enhance agricultural productivity .

Local trade and exchange were integral to the village economy. Market towns (Nigama) served as hubs for the exchange of goods between villages and towns . Villages primarily supplied agricultural produce, while towns provided crafts, tools, and other manufactured goods . Established trade routes facilitated this exchange, connecting villages to broader economic networks .

Craft specialization was another important aspect of the Magadh economy. Some villages specialized in particular crafts, such as carpentry, reed making, and salt making . Artisans were often organized into guilds and resided in designated areas within towns . Their skills were valued, and they sometimes had obligations to the ruler, such as providing a day's labor per month , highlighting the significance of craft production to the state.

Taxation played a key role in the economic life of Magadh villages . The primary form of tax was a share of the agricultural produce, with peasants typically paying one-sixth of their output as Bali . The collection of taxes was carried out by royal agents, who were often assisted by the village headmen, indicating a collaborative effort between

the central authority and local leadership in revenue extraction . Warriors (Kshatriya) and priests (Brahmana) were generally exempt from paying these taxes . Taxes were paid in both cash and kind .

Village-Level Administration and Governance

Magadh villages possessed a degree of self-governance through village assemblies, which were led by local chiefs known as Gramakas, Gramini, or Gramabhojaka . These assemblies likely played a crucial role in managing local affairs and making decisions relevant to the village community . Executive, judicial, and military functions were often separated at the village level .

The village headman (Gramini/Gramabhojaka) was a pivotal figure responsible for maintaining law and order within the village and collecting taxes on behalf of the central government . Their responsibilities likely extended to overseeing various aspects of village administration and mediating disputes among the villagers .

The relationship between the village administration and the central Magadhan government was characterized by a system where the central authority relied on village headmen for the efficient collection of revenue . Royal agents often worked in conjunction with village headmen in this process, indicating a level of integration between local and imperial administration in matters of finance .

Maintaining law and order at the village level was a primary responsibility of the village headman . The separation of executive, judicial, and military functions at the village level suggests a structured approach to ensuring peace and security within the community, potentially involving different segments of the village assembly in these roles.



1. INTRODUCTION

The Vijayanagara Empire, which flourished from 1336 to 1646 AD, stands as a significant epoch in the history of South India . Founded by Harihara I and Bukka Raya I, the empire emerged as a bastion of Hindu culture and resistance against the expanding Islamic sultanates of the north . With its capital initially located in Hampi, also known as Vijayanagara, the empire grew into a major political and economic power, leaving behind a rich legacy of art, architecture, and administrative innovation. Understanding the multifaceted life within the Vijayanagara Empire necessitates a close examination of both its vibrant capital city and the agrarian communities that formed its hinterland. This report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the social, economic, and political life in Vijayanagara city and its surrounding villages, offering a holistic perspective on the empire's functioning and societal structure. The long duration

of the empire, spanning over three centuries, and its strategic location in a region marked by dynamic political interactions, suggest a complex interplay of factors that contributed to its sustenance and resilience. Examining the differences and connections between urban and rural life will illuminate the empire's internal dynamics and the relationship between the center of power and its periphery. Ultimately, a thorough understanding of both the city and its villages is crucial for a complete appreciation of the Vijayanagara Empire's societal framework and its enduring impact on South Indian history.

2. SOCIAL FABRIC OF VIJAYANAGARA

2.1 The Cosmopolitan City

Vijayanagara city presented a vibrant and diverse social landscape, deeply rooted in Hindu traditions yet characterized by an openness to various religious and cultural influences . Its population comprised a rich tapestry of individuals, including Brahmins, who held a privileged status, along with merchants (primarily Vaishyas), skilled artisans (largely from the Shudra varna but also organized into influential guilds), soldiers (including Kshatriyas and individuals from other castes), and a significant presence of foreign traders hailing from Persia, China, and the Middle East . This cosmopolitan nature was fostered by the empire's active engagement in trade and its strategic geographical location, which attracted people from diverse regions, creating a melting pot of cultures and ideas . While Hindu customs predominated, the rulers generally adopted a policy of religious tolerance, allowing Muslim communities representation and employment within the administration

At the heart of Vijayanagara's urban life were its grand temples, most notably the Virupaksha and Vitthala temples, both now recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These temples were not merely religious edifices; they played a pivotal role in shaping the city's character, serving as significant cultural and potentially economic and social hubs. The Virupaksha temple, with origins tracing back to the 7th century, evolved into a magnificent complex

under royal patronage . Inscriptions about the Virupaksha temple date back to the ninth and tenth centuries. It started as a small shrine and later developed into a huge complex during the Vijayanagara rule. The temple is dedicated to Lord Virupaksha, a form of Lord Shiva, and his consort Pampadevi . The main tower of this magnificent temple, built in the fifteenth century, has nine stories and stands 50 meters tall. Similarly, the 15th-century Vitthala Temple stood as a testament to the empire's architectural prowess, renowned for its intricate stone structures and the famed musical pillars . It is considered one of the largest and most famous structures in Hampi and is dedicated to Lord Vitthala, an avatar of Lord Vishnu . The temple was designed as a celestial palace on earth and involved skilled architects, engineers, and craftsmen in its construction . These temple centers often grew into trading towns, and their large complexes housed diverse social groups, thereby stimulating economic exchange within the city . Royal patronage ensured the grandeur and prominence of these religious institutions, which in turn influenced urban identity, facilitated social gatherings during festivals, and supported a multitude of artisans and craftspeople.

The social structure of Vijayanagara was largely defined by the Hindu caste system, a hierarchical division of society into four primary varnas: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra . This system, with its inherent hierarchy and community representation for each varna, was a dominant feature of urban social life, as noted by Allasani Peddanna in his work *Manucharitam*. Brahmins occupied the apex of this social pyramid, enjoying considerable respect as scholars, writers of literature, and religious teachers . Their roles extended beyond religious duties, with some Brahmins also serving as soldiers and administrators, wielding significant influence, particularly within the royal court and religious institutions . Notably, they were often granted exemptions from taxation, further solidifying their privileged status . Below them were the Kshatriyas, who, along with the ruling elite, held control over military and governance matters . Interestingly, the empire exhibited a degree of social mobility, especially within the military ranks, where

individuals from various castes, such as Kuruba, Nayaka, and Bedas, could ascend to high positions based on their merit and abilities . The Vaishyas formed the mercantile class, actively engaged in trade and commerce, playing an essential role in the city's economy . Their extensive networks facilitated the flow of goods and contributed significantly to Vijayanagara's wealth. Finally, the Shudras constituted a large segment of the urban population, primarily involved in labor, agriculture, and a variety of other occupations . While often regarded as inferior within the social hierarchy, their labor was indispensable for the city's functioning, supporting its infrastructure, crafts, and various services. Some Shudras, however, also held high positions, with rulers and generals sometimes being from this varna.

Valuable insights into Vijayanagara's social customs, festivals, and governance are provided by accounts of foreign travelers like Domingo Paes and Abdur Razzaq. Paes, a Portuguese traveler, documented the empire's prosperity, advanced irrigation systems, impressive architecture, and bustling seaports. He noted the abundance of provisions in the city's markets and the heavy traffic of oxen laden with goods . Paes was also struck by the respect shown to women in Vijayanagara society and their active participation in economic and social life. Abdur Razzaq, a Persian diplomat, was very impressed by Vijayanagar's 'enormous magnitude and population' and its seven concentric walled fortifications of stone . He described the broad and long bazaars, where flower sellers had tall platforms and jewelers sold pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds openly . Razzaq also noted that nobles and commoners alike adorned themselves with pearls and jewels . Nicolo Dei Conti, another foreign traveler, mentioned the celebration of weddings with singing, feasting, and music . He also described festivals with numerous oil lamps lit in and around temples and the practice of sprinkling passers-by with saffron water . Women in Vijayanagara's urban society occupied varied roles, with some holding prominent positions and participating in political, social, and literary spheres . They were actively involved in trade and temple-related activities, including the flourishing

Devadasi system, where temple dancing girls held a respectable position . Many women also found employment in royal palaces as dancers, servants, palanquin bearers, and even wrestlers, as noted by Domingo Paes . Some women were learned, with figures like Gangadevi, wife of Kumarakampana, authoring the famous work Madhuravijayam . However, their social standing was not uniform and likely varied based on their social strata . Practices such as Sati (self-immolation of widows), polygamy, and the dowry system were prevalent customs, as mentioned by foreign travelers like Nicolo Dei Conti . These diverse roles and customs suggest a complex social fabric where women, while contributing to various aspects of urban life, also navigated prevailing societal norms and expectations.

2.2 The Agrarian Village

In contrast to the bustling cosmopolitan life of Vijayanagara city, the surrounding villages presented a primarily agrarian society, deeply rooted in a rigid caste hierarchy that significantly influenced social roles and responsibilities. Agriculture formed the very foundation of rural existence, and the social structure was largely organized around agricultural practices and traditional customs .

Brahmins held a position of considerable authority in these village communities, particularly in those centered around temples . They played a vital role in overseeing religious rituals and were often involved in educational activities within the villages . The empire actively encouraged land grants known as brahmadeya to Brahmins, which further solidified their position and influence in rural society. These land grants often led to the development of temple-centered economies, where religious institutions played a crucial role in managing agricultural resources and facilitating the redistribution of surplus wealth ¹.

The temple served as the central focal point in village life, extending its influence beyond religious worship . It functioned as a vital hub for economic transactions, a place for social gatherings, and the organizing center for various festivals. This multifaceted role of the temple reinforced the communal identity of the villagers and played a

significant part in the distribution of resources within the community.

Traditional customs and cultural expressions were integral to shaping the rhythm of village life. Folk traditions, encompassing music, dance, and storytelling, were central to community interactions, providing entertainment and serving as a means for preserving oral history and transmitting cultural values across generations.

Artisans and laborers in the villages often organized themselves into guilds, known as Srenis . These guilds played a crucial role in ensuring the economic security of their members by regulating wages and protecting their trade interests. This form of organization provided a framework for cooperation and mutual support among the craftspeople within the rural economy.

Women in the villages actively participated in the economic activities, primarily through agricultural labor, weaving, and various domestic crafts . Their contributions were essential to the rural economy. However, compared to their urban counterparts, their social mobility remained limited due to prevailing societal norms and traditional expectations, which often confined their roles largely to the domestic and agricultural spheres.

3.ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE OF VIJAYANAGARA

3.1 Prosperity and Trade in the City

The Vijayanagara Empire was widely recognized as one of the wealthiest states of its time, a fact corroborated by the accounts of numerous foreign travelers who visited the empire during the 15th and 16th centuries . These accounts often speak of the empire's splendor and the affluence of its capital city . The primary unit of currency in gold was the varaha, also known as the pagoda, which weighed approximately 3.4 grams . The varaha frequently featured the image of Varaha, the boar incarnation of the Hindu deity Vishnu, highlighting the empire's religious identity. Other symbols on the coins included Hanuman, Garuda, Venkatesh, Balkrishna, Uma Maheswara, Lakshmi Narayana, Saraswati-Brahma, Nandhi, Sita Rama, tiger, lion, and the mythical double-headed eagle Gandabherunda . Harihara I and Bukka I used the Hanuman symbol .

Krishna Deva Raya's coins had figures of Venkatesh and Balkrishna ⁴³. Achyuta Raya used Garuda and the Gandaberunda. Tirumala maintained the original Varaha and also depicted Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita.

The varaha was further divided into smaller denominations, including the perta, which was equivalent to half a varaha, and the fanam, which constituted one-tenth of a perta. The fanam was a small gold coin. The tar was a silver coin, valued at one-sixteenth of a pana or varaha. The jittal was a copper coin, worth one-third of a tar. An early 15th-century Ilkhanid ambassador reported the use of gold alloy, pure silver, and copper jital in Vijayanagara.

The Vijayanagara Empire engaged in extensive trade, with a wide range of goods being exchanged both domestically and internationally. The chief exports included cotton, silk, spices (especially black pepper, turmeric, cardamom, and ginger), rice (both black and white varieties), saltpeter, and sugar. The empire also exported iron, sandalwood, teak, pepper, cloves, and cotton textiles. Diamonds were also a significant export. The main imports consisted of horses (primarily from Persia and Arabia), pearls, copper, and coral. Other imports encompassed elephants (from Ceylon), ivory, silk, mercury, China silks and velvets, artillery, cannons, and saltpeter.

The development of shipbuilding played a crucial role in facilitating both coastal and overseas trade, with the empire reportedly possessing around 300 seaports. Ships were the primary mode of transport for these trades. The Malabar coast, with its important port of Cannanore, served as the most important commercial hub on the West coast. Other notable ports included Mangalore, Barkur, Bhatkal, Honavar, Calicut, Cochin, and Pulicat. Vijayanagara established extensive commercial ties with various regions, including the islands of the Indian Ocean, Burma, the Malay Archipelago, and China in the East, and Arabia, Persia, South Africa, Abyssinia, and Portugal on the West. This vast network of trade relationships underscores the empire's significant position in the global economic landscape of the period.

3.2 Agriculture and Local Economy in Villages

Agriculture was the bedrock of the village economy within the Vijayanagara Empire, with the majority of the rural population engaged in cultivation. The primary crops grown included rice (both black and white varieties), which served as the staple food, along with millets such as jowar and ragi, and cotton. Farmers also cultivated sugarcane, pulses, various spices like black pepper, turmeric, cardamom, and ginger, as well as betel leaves, areca nuts, and coconuts. The land was divided into irrigated (neerambhika) and rain-fed (kadambara) types.

The agricultural prosperity of the region was largely attributed to well-developed irrigation systems, encompassing reservoirs, tanks, and canals. Investments in these irrigation projects were made by various stakeholders, including kings, governors, wealthy merchants, peasants, and temple caretakers ⁵³. The empire actively promoted land grants, known as brahmadeya, to Brahmins and temples. These grants fostered the development of temple-centered economies, where religious institutions played a significant role in managing agricultural resources and redistributing surplus wealth ¹.

Trade within the villages was primarily localized, with weekly markets functioning as key commercial centers where farmers and artisans engaged in the exchange of goods. The rural economy was dynamic, with barter systems operating alongside transactions involving currency ¹. Artisans residing in the villages were skilled in various crafts, including textile production, metalwork, and pottery, catering to the needs of both local and regional markets. These industries were often regulated by guilds. The state imposed taxes on the agricultural produce, which formed a substantial portion of the empire's revenue, providing the necessary funds for its administrative and military operations. The rate of taxation on agricultural produce varied depending on factors such as the type of crop, the quality of the soil, and the method of irrigation employed. Besides land tax, there were also professional taxes on shopkeepers, farm-servants, shepherds, washermen, potters, shoemakers, and musicians.

4. POLITICAL ORDER AND GOVERNANCE

4.1 Central Authority in the City

The political framework of the Vijayanagara Empire was characterized by a highly organized structure, with the king holding the supreme position of authority . The king was the central figure in the administrative machinery, wielding ultimate power in civil, military, and judicial matters . He was assisted by a council of ministers, known as the Mantriparisad, who provided counsel on administrative affairs . The Maha Pradhana, or chief minister, held the most prominent position within this council . The empire was also governed through regional governors, often referred to as Nayakas or Mandaleswaras, who oversaw various territories .

The capital city of Vijayanagara was heavily fortified, featuring imposing walls, with Abdur Razzaq mentioning seven concentric rings of ramparts, and strategically located watchtowers . These fortifications underscored the city's importance as a major political and military stronghold ⁴. The empire maintained a formidable army, which included well-trained cavalry, often relying on the import of horses from Persia and Arabia, along with war elephants and skilled archers . Military commanders within the empire were known as Nayakas or Poligars .

The administrative system of Vijayanagara operated through a decentralized framework, with provincial governors, also known as Nayakas, administering different regions while maintaining allegiance to the central authority . This system, known as the Amara-Nayaka system, involved the granting of land (Amaram) to these military chiefs in exchange for their military service and the payment of an annual tribute to the king . Furthermore, Vijayanagara engaged in diplomatic relations with foreign powers, most notably with the Portuguese, which facilitated trade partnerships and secured military alliances, contributing to the empire's stability and economic prosperity .

4.2 Local Administration in Villages

The administration of villages within the Vijayanagara Empire was largely semi-autonomous, with local governance primarily managed by councils such as the nadu at the

district level and the grama sabhas at the village level . These councils played a vital role in maintaining order within their jurisdictions by resolving local disputes, managing land records, and overseeing the collection of taxes. The nadu was a territorial division higher than a village, and the grama was the smallest administrative unit . However, the central authority of the empire remained supreme, with the king as the ultimate court of justice . Vijayanagara rulers appointed officials, such as the Mahanayakacharya, to supervise revenue collection and ensure the enforcement of laws, thereby integrating the villages into the broader administrative framework of the empire .

While subject to royal authority, villages enjoyed a significant degree of self-governance, allowing local institutions to function with considerable independence . Village headmen, known by various titles such as Gowda, Reddi, and Maniyam, led the village panchayats and managed local affairs with the assistance of village accountants (Karnam, Senabhova) and watchmen (Talaiyari) . The Ayagar system, prevalent in village administration, involved a collective of twelve functionaries who were responsible for conducting various village affairs . These village servants were paid by grants of land or a portion of agricultural produce . The rulers of Vijayanagara took active measures to promote rural prosperity while maintaining strict political oversight. They implemented measures to encourage agriculture through the development of irrigation projects and the granting of land. To safeguard villages from external threats and internal conflicts, military outposts were strategically positioned, providing protection against potential raids and ensuring stability across the empire .





CONCLUSION

The Vijayanagara Empire presented a complex and vibrant society, characterized by distinct yet interconnected urban and rural spheres. Vijayanagara city stood as a cosmopolitan hub, a center of political power, thriving trade, and rich cultural exchange, marked by a diverse population and grand religious institutions. In contrast, the surrounding villages exhibited a primarily agrarian character, with a more rigid social hierarchy and a semi-autonomous system of local governance centered around agriculture and traditional customs. The economic landscape reflected this duality, with the city flourishing through extensive international trade and a sophisticated monetary system, while the villages formed the agricultural backbone, sustaining the empire through their produce and local crafts. Politically, the empire maintained a centralized authority in the city, balanced by a degree of local autonomy in the villages, ensuring both stability and the efficient administration of its vast territories. The hierarchical yet functional relationship between the city and its villages was crucial to the overall strength and longevity of the Vijayanagara Empire. The empire's lasting impact on South Indian history is undeniable, leaving behind a legacy of architectural marvels, significant literary contributions, and enduring social and administrative traditions that continue to resonate today.

THE CITY-FOREST CONTINUUM

DISHA SINGH



ABSTRACT

The City-Forest Continuum looks at the close relationship between cities and forests in ancient Indian culture, as shown in old texts and traditions. Starting with the Rigveda, which treats forests as sacred and essential to life, this research highlights how nature was deeply respected and woven into people's lives. Texts like the Atharvaveda and Yajurveda also talk about forests, focusing on their healing powers and importance in rituals. Beyond these writings, the study explores folk traditions stories, music, and dance that show how people lived in harmony with nature. Stories from the Sundarbans, like those about Bonbibi, and the songs of tribes like the Kudiya and Baiga, celebrate the role of forests in daily life. Folk dances, such as Theyyam in Kerala, often honor deities linked to nature. These traditions, along with ancient texts, give us a glimpse into a time when forests were at the center of life and culture. By understanding these practices, we can appreciate how much forests meant to our ancestors and how they shaped the way cities grew without losing touch with nature.

KEYWORDS

City-Forest Continuum; Ancient India; Sacred Geography; Rigveda; Atharvaveda; Yajurveda; Folk Traditions; Nature Worship; Forest Deities; Eco-cultural Practices; Indigenous Knowledge; Urban Development; Human-Nature Relationship.

INTRODUCTION

In ancient Indian culture, cities and forests were closely connected. People did not see forests and cities as separate or opposite. Instead, they believed that cities and forests could exist together in harmony. Unlike today, where cities grow by cutting down forests, ancient Indian cities were built in a way that respected and preserved nature. Forests were not destroyed but protected, and people understood the importance of living close to nature. Ancient Indian books like the Rigveda, Atharvaveda, and Yajurveda show how much people respected forests. These books described forests as sacred and powerful places. The Rigveda talks about “Aranyani,” the goddess of forests, who protected nature. The Atharvaveda describes the healing power of plants and trees in forests, showing how deeply connected people were to nature.

Apart from religious texts, many stories, songs, and traditions also show love and respect for forests. For example, in the Sundarbans forest of West Bengal, people believe in Bonbibi, a goddess who protects humans and animals in the forest. In central India, tribal communities like the Baiga and Kudiya sing songs and perform dances that praise nature and encourage forest protection. In Kerala, the Theyyam dance celebrates forest spirits, showing how people saw nature as sacred and important. Ancient Indian cities were also planned with nature in mind. Cities like Varanasi, Ujjain, and Dholavira were built near rivers, forests, and natural resources. The people made sure that forests and green spaces were part of the city, helping maintain clean air, water, and a healthy environment. There were also sacred groves, small forest areas protected by local communities. These groves were seen as homes of gods and spirits, so people did not cut down trees or harm animals there. This practice helped protect biodiversity and maintain environmental balance.

The way ancient Indians built cities can teach us important lessons today. As modern cities grow, forests are often destroyed, causing pollution and climate problems. But if we learn from ancient Indian traditions, we can build cities that protect nature instead of destroying it. Keeping green spaces, protecting forests, and involving local communities in conservation can help us create a better and healthier future.

This paper explores how ancient Indians respected and protected forests, how they planned cities with nature in mind, and how folk traditions helped in preserving nature. By understanding these old practices, we can find new ways to build cities that live in harmony with nature, just like ancient India did.

THE VEDAS

THE RIGVEDA

The Rigveda (around 1500 BCE) is the oldest and most respected book of the Vedas in ancient India. This text shows that forests were very important in the life of people and were considered sacred. People believed that trees, plants, and rivers were not just natural things but had divine spirits inside them. They thought that nature was a living being that deserved deep respect and worship. ³ One of the most important trees mentioned in the Rigveda is the Ashvattha tree, also known as the Peepal tree. This tree was called the Tree of Life because it symbolized long life, deep wisdom, and spiritual growth. People believed that sitting under a Peepal tree could bring them knowledge, peace, and good health. This belief showed how much people loved and respected nature, and it encouraged them to protect trees and forests. The Rigveda also introduced the concept of Tapovan, which means forest of penance.

This was a place deep inside the forest where saints, sages, and spiritual teachers lived. They stayed in these forests to meditate, learn, and share knowledge. These places were called ashrams, and they became centers of learning and spiritual growth. People believed that the peace and beauty of the forest helped the mind become calm and wise. This belief encouraged people to protect forests and avoid destroying them for their own gain. The idea that forests were homes of wisdom and spirituality helped in preventing the careless cutting of trees. People understood that forests were not just useful for wood or land but were also important for the growth of the human mind, body, and soul.

The Rigveda clearly shows that ancient Indian society had a very strong and positive relationship with forests. They did not see forests as empty land to be cleared for farming or building cities but as sacred places filled with divine energy. This belief in the divine power of nature helped people protect forests and live in harmony with them.

THE ATHARVAVEDA AND YAJURVEDA

The Atharvaveda (around 1200 BCE) is another ancient text that highlights the importance of forests, especially for their healing powers. This text contains detailed knowledge about different plants and herbs found in forests and their medicinal uses. People believed that forests were like natural hospitals, providing medicine and healing for every kind of illness. Many of the herbs and plants mentioned in the Atharvaveda are still used today in Ayurveda, the traditional Indian medical system. For example, the Atharvaveda talks about herbs that could cure fever, wounds, snake bites, and even mental illnesses. The text teaches that nature itself is a healer and that humans should protect forests because they provide medicines that keep everyone healthy. This knowledge made people respect forests as life saving places and discouraged them from destroying or overusing forest resources.

The Yajurveda, another important Vedic text, also highlighted the spiritual and ritualistic importance of forests. Many religious ceremonies, known as yajnas, required the use of special wood from particular trees found in forests. However, the Yajurveda taught that trees should not be cut down carelessly. People were advised to take wood only when necessary and with a feeling of respect. It was believed that every tree had a spirit and cutting down a tree without purpose was seen as a sin.

The Yajurveda also encouraged people to plant trees as a part of their duty towards nature. Planting trees was not just for personal benefit but was considered a sacred task that brought blessings and good fortune. This belief created a sense of responsibility among people to care for nature. Forests were seen as providers of health, wealth, and spiritual strength, and people understood that harming forests would also harm their own well being.

In ancient Indian culture, the relationship between humans and forests was built on respect, care, and gratitude. People did not see forests as something to exploit for money or resources. Instead, they saw forests as homes of gods, sources of wisdom, and places of healing. The teachings from the Atharvaveda and Yajurveda made it clear that protecting forests was not just a good practice it was a sacred duty. This understanding kept forests safe for many centuries, allowing humans and nature to coexist peacefully.

ANCIENT URBAN PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1.HOW FORESTS WERE PART OF ANCIENT CITY

In ancient India, cities were built in a way that kept them closely connected to nature. Unlike modern cities, which often destroy forests and natural landscapes to make space for buildings, ancient cities were carefully designed to live alongside nature. Cities like Varanasi, Ujjain, and Madurai were established near rivers, forests, and sacred groves, allowing people to stay connected to natural resources. This connection ensured that humans and nature lived in harmony, rather than one replacing the other. Forests played a very important role in the development and protection of these ancient cities. They acted as natural barriers or walls that protected the cities from enemies, wild animals, and harsh weather conditions like strong winds or extreme heat. These forests also helped in controlling the local climate by providing shade, reducing heat, and keeping the air fresh. 5 Apart from protection, forests provided many essential resources to the people living in these cities. They were a source of wood for building houses, fuel for cooking, herbs for medicine, and fruits for food. People did not destroy forests completely but took only what they needed, ensuring that nature remained undisturbed. Inside the cities, there were also gardens, ponds, and green spaces to ensure that people always had access to nature. This balanced approach helped in keeping the environment healthy and clean. The planning of ancient cities was not just about buildings and roads; it was about maintaining a close relationship with nature. Forests were seen as living entities and were often considered sacred. This belief led to the creation of sacred groves small forest areas dedicated to gods or spirits where no one was allowed to cut trees or hunt animals. This practice naturally helped in preserving forests and biodiversity

2.KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA

Kautilya, a brilliant minister in the court of King Chandragupta Maurya, highlighted the importance of forests in his famous work Arthashastra. He understood that forests were not only valuable for their natural resources but also played a key role in the economy, protection, and overall stability of a kingdom. According to Kautilya, forests provided timber, medicinal plants, fruits, animal products, and materials for making tools and weapons. This made forests an important source of income and resources for the king and his people. Kautilya classified forests based on their use. He mentioned produce forests that provided resources like wood, fruits, and medicinal plants. Elephant forests were created specifically for capturing and training elephants for the army. There were also forests for sages and Brahmins to live and meditate peacefully, which helped in maintaining the spiritual balance of society. In addition, some forests were reserved for animals, allowing them to live freely without human interference. Kautilya also introduced a clear system for managing these forests. He appointed a person called the Director of Forest Produce, who was responsible for looking after the forest resources, ensuring proper use of timber and plants, and protecting the forests from illegal activities. This person was supported by forest guards who ensured that no one could cut down trees or hunt animals without permission. This shows that Kautilya valued the preservation of nature along with economic growth. Kautilya also believed that forests played a protective role for cities. They acted as natural barriers against enemies, wild animals, and harsh weather. He suggested 6 that new villages should be built near forests to have easy access to resources while also ensuring greenery around human settlements.

He even mentioned creating special animal parks and protected areas where animals could live without harm, which is similar to the idea of modern wildlife sanctuaries. One of the most interesting things Kautilya suggested was about using forest resources wisely. He stated that no one should cut down trees or exploit forest resources without paying a fee to the king. However, in times of natural disasters like floods, enemy attacks, or famines, people were allowed to use forest resources without any penalty. This shows that Kautilya had a practical and balanced approach toward using nature's resources while ensuring that forests were not destroyed carelessly.

Kautilya's views on forest management in Arthashastra show that ancient India had a deep understanding of the importance of nature. His methods of protecting forests, using their resources responsibly, and promoting sustainable living made sure that forests remained a vital part of society. His ideas were not only beneficial for the economy but also helped in preserving nature and ensuring a balance between human life and the natural world.

FORESTS IN FOLK TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL PRACTICE

1.THE LEGEND OF BONBIBI IN THE SUNDARBANS

The Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world, is known for its unique relationship between people and nature. The local people believe in a powerful guardian deity called Bonbibi, who is said to protect both humans and wildlife in the forest. According to an old story, Bonbibi was sent by Allah (God) to protect people from a demon named Dakshin Rai, who ruled over the forest and its tigers. The people believed that if they prayed to Bonbibi, she would keep them safe from wild animals, especially tigers.

Even today, before entering the forest, people offer prayers to Bonbibi, asking for her protection and guidance. They also promise not to harm the forest or take more resources than they need. This belief has helped the local communities to live in harmony with the forest for centuries, ensuring that the forest is not destroyed or overused. The Bonbibi tradition teaches an important lesson about protecting nature. The people understand that if they take care of the forest, the forest will take care of them. This belief is an example of ecological ethics, where people naturally protect the environment through their cultural practices.

2.TRIBAL SONGS AND THEYYAM: EXPRESSIONS OF FOREST WORSHIP

In central India, some tribal communities like the Kudiya and Baiga tribes have a deep connection with forests. They show their love and respect for nature through songs and stories. These songs celebrate the beauty of forests, the animals that live there, and the resources the forest provides. The songs also remind people that it is their duty to protect and care for the forest, ensuring that it continues to provide for future generations.



In Kerala, a traditional dance form called Theyyam is performed to honor forest spirits and deities. During Theyyam, performers dress up as forest gods using natural materials like leaves, bark, and flowers. This symbolizes the close relationship between humans and nature. People believe that the forest gods bless the land and the community, ensuring good rainfall, healthy crops, and peace.

The purpose of such practices was not only spiritual but also ecological. These cultural traditions helped people understand the importance of protecting forests and using natural resources carefully. Long before modern conservation methods, these cultural practices encouraged people to live sustainably and respect nature.

SACRED GROVES

A COMMUNITY LED CONSERVATION IN ANCIENT INDIA



One of the most effective ways ancient communities protected forests was through sacred groves. Sacred groves are small patches of forest that were considered holy and protected by local communities for religious and ecological reasons. These 8 groves were believed to be the abode of gods, spirits, or ancestors, and no one was allowed to cut trees, hunt animals, or cultivate the land within these groves.

Different regions in India had different names for these sacred groves:

- Devrai in Maharashtra
- Kaavu in Kerala
- Devarakadu in Karnataka

The protection of sacred groves had many environmental benefits:

1. Preserving Biodiversity – Since these forests were untouched, they became safe homes for many plant and animal species that would otherwise be lost.

2. Maintaining Water Cycles – The trees in these groves helped prevent soil erosion, maintained groundwater levels, and supported local rivers and lakes.

3. Acting as Carbon Sinks – The forests absorbed carbon dioxide from the air, reducing the harmful effects of climate change.

By protecting these sacred groves, local communities played a huge role in preserving nature without any government intervention. This was a clear example of community led conservation, where people voluntarily took responsibility to protect forests for future generations.



CONCLUSION

The City-Forest Continuum in ancient India shows us that cities and forests can live together in harmony. Ancient Indians understood the importance of nature and made sure that their cities did not destroy forests but instead coexisted with them. Texts like the Vedas and the Arthashastra taught people how to use forest resources carefully without harming the environment. Similarly, folk traditions, sacred groves, and cultural practices encouraged people to respect and protect forests.

These ancient practices teach us an important lesson for today that development and nature do not have to be enemies. If we follow the wisdom of the past, we can build modern cities without damaging forests and natural resources. This will help us create a healthy, green, and sustainable future where progress and nature can grow together.

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2. -SACRIFICIALLY IMPORTANT TREES REVEALED IN THE YAJURVEDA SAAHITĀ – THEIR DESCRIPTION AND USESRAGHAVA S BODDUPALLI AND VEDAM VENKATA RAMA SASTRI* (RECEIVED 16 MARCH 2015; REVISED 27 JULY 2015)

3. :-KAUTILYA'S ARTHAŚĀSTRA ON FORESTRY ILYA'S BY MANUBENDU BANERJEE

4. :-THE CULT BONBIBI OF SUNDARBAN DELTA DR. BINITA BASU

5. ASSESSMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SACRED GROVES IN KERALA PART OF WESTERN GHATS"PG:- 39 TO 48 10

6. - SACRED GROVES: THE CONSEQUENCE OF TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT ARPITA VIPAT, ERACH BHARUCHA FIRST PUBLISHED: 10 NOVEMBER 2014

FROM ROYAL EXILE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING: FORESTS AS SACRED SPACES IN THE JATAKAS

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ABSTRACT

In ancient times, the Jatakas, a part of Khuddaka Nikaya of Sutta Pitaka often depicted forests as spiritual spaces that have been integral to the practice of wisdom, meditation, and moral growth. The forests in these tales and their respective depictions in the paintings shows that forests were not simply natural settings but were imbued with symbolic significance as places where one could

seek refuge from worldly distractions, undergo moral trials, or engage in deep meditation.

The themes of these tales and paintings reflect a reverence for nature and a deeper understanding of the forest as a sacred place for purification, transformation and the cultivation of virtues.

PURPOSE

This paper aims to make historical exploration in Buddhist scriptural knowledge on forests as a sacred space that has existed since ancient times and have been depicted in later paintings as well. This paper explains the characterization of animals, trees, tree spirits and sacrifices as a source of environmental virtues. By portraying the forest as sacred, the Jatakas encourage individuals to recognize nature as a reflection of divine qualities and to seek spiritual growth and purity through a deeper connection with the world around them. The study of jatakas (text and images) could be taken up as a vital topic for examining the nexus of formation of environmental ethics and will help in analysing the cultural landscape of ancient Indian society.

SCOPE

A micro-analysis of ancient Buddhist scriptures and paintings needs to be taken up to understand how forests have been perceived and how the notion of forest as a sacred space have shaped the cultural landscape in ancient India. This paper will unveil how the knowledge and notion of forest has always been a part of deep thinking and by what means have been depicted in ancient Indian history.

METHODOLOGY

Drawing upon the theme of Reading Images, Seeing texts; this paper qualitatively analyses how perception of forests have been shaped through analysing the primary source of Jatakas and their pictorial depictions in later paintings.

KEYWORDS

Buddhist Jatakas, Forest depictions, Spiritual Spaces, Sacred space for transformation, Environmental ethics, Knowledge and notion of forests.

INTRODUCTION

Forests have long been revered in religious and cultural traditions as sacred spaces, offering an environment conducive to meditation, personal transformation, and spiritual awakening. In ancient Buddhist traditions, forests play a significant role in the Jatakas, a collection of stories that recount the previous lives of the Buddha, offering moral lessons and insights into the nature of wisdom, compassion, and self-realization. The Jatakas, part of the Khuddaka Nikaya in the Sutta Pitaka, depict the forest as a space of both physical and spiritual exile, as well as a place of moral trial, purification, and enlightenment. These narratives often use forests as symbolic landscapes where spiritual awakening and moral trials unfold, emphasizing their role in the cultivation of virtues, personal transformation, and the quest for wisdom.

In the visual arts, too, the depiction of forests, trees, and animals in Buddhist paintings further enriches the understanding of forests as sacred spaces. As such, the Jatakas serve not only as valuable religious texts but also as significant cultural artifacts that offer insights into how ancient Indian societies viewed the natural world, the forest, and their spiritual significance. This paper aims to explore the role of forests as sacred spaces in the Jatakas, drawing connections between ancient Buddhist teachings, their literary representations, and visual portrayals in later paintings.

1) THE ROLE OF FORESTS AS SPACES FOR EXILE AND TRANSFORMATION

One of the most prominent themes in the Jatakas is that of exile or retreat into the forest. The protagonist, often a king, prince, or noble person, is exiled from their palace or home due to a moral or spiritual test. This exile into the wilderness symbolizes a necessary journey of self-purification, renunciation of worldly attachments, and the pursuit of spiritual wisdom. The forest is not merely a physical place but a symbol of a transformative space that facilitates the Bodhisattva's spiritual growth.

VESSANTARA JATAKA: THE STORY OF GENEROSITY AND SACRIFICE

In the Vessantara Jataka, one of the most significant Jataka tales, the Bodhisattva is born as Prince Vessantara, known for his extreme generosity. At the start of the story, the prince is driven by a deep commitment to charity, giving away everything he owns, including his kingdom's wealth, his wife, and children. His acts of generosity are so extreme that they lead to his exile in the forest. This exile, however, is not presented as a punishment but rather as an opportunity for the prince to embody the highest form of generosity—giving away what is most precious to him.

While living in the forest, Vessantara faces numerous challenges, including the temptation to give away his children to fulfill the needs of others. His actions ultimately illustrate that true compassion transcends worldly attachments. The forest becomes the space for him to practice the most profound form of generosity, even at the cost of his own happiness. His time in the forest, therefore, serves as a purification of his desires, a form of spiritual and moral trial. Through this hardship, he attains a higher spiritual wisdom, and in the end, he is rewarded with the return of his family and his kingdom, symbolizing the eventual reward for spiritual purity and selflessness.

This story exemplifies the forest as a place where the Bodhisattva confronts difficult tests and undergoes a process of self-purification. It is the wilderness that allows for Vessantara's complete transcendence of ego and worldly attachments, which is crucial for his spiritual development. The forest, in this case, serves as a transformative space where the Bodhisattva purifies himself through renunciation and sacrifice.

Forests play a significant role in Buddhist Jataka tales as settings for transformation, moral testing, and spiritual realization. In this mural, which appears to depict a royal procession, the forested landscape serves as a symbolic space between worldly power and spiritual awakening. Jataka stories often portray forests as places where kings,



Fig 1

Vessantara Jataka mural, 19th century, Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi district, Bangkok, Thailand

ascetics, and seekers renounce material wealth in pursuit of enlightenment, reinforcing the Buddhist ideal of detachment. The presence of dense greenery and mountainous terrain suggests a transition from civilization to the untamed wilderness, where karmic consequences unfold and moral lessons are learned. Such imagery reflects how forests in Buddhist literature represent both physical and spiritual journeys, where individuals confront their virtues and vices, ultimately striving for wisdom and liberation.

SIBI JATAKA: SELF-SACRIFICE AND COMPASSION IN THE FOREST

The Sibi Jataka tells the story of King Sibi, who embodies the ultimate form of self-sacrifice and compassion. When a dove is pursued by a hawk, it seeks refuge in the king's lap. The hawk demands that the king return the dove, but Sibi, out of compassion, refuses. He offers his own flesh as a substitute for the dove's life, demonstrating his willingness to sacrifice everything for the sake of compassion.

Although the primary events of this story unfold in the royal court, the forest becomes an essential space in later parts of the tale, symbolizing Sibi's journey toward ultimate self-sacrifice. The forest in the Jataka is presented as a space of moral purification, where the king's virtues are tested. Sibi's moral integrity is tested by the physical and emotional challenges he faces in the forest during his trials.

The wilderness, symbolizing both the external and internal worlds, represents the place where Sibi transcends his ego and selfish desires. His journey into the forest helps him realize that true wisdom and compassion lie in giving up the self.

Through his actions, King Sibi attains spiritual insight, and his self-sacrifice serves as a profound example of how the forest, as a sacred space, fosters an individual's transformation toward enlightenment. This tale also illustrates that a connection with nature and the willingness to give for the welfare of others is central to Buddhist moral philosophy.



Fig 2

Sibi Jataka: during one of his previous lives, the Buddha offers his own flesh to a hawk to ransom the life of a pigeon.

Date: between circa 100 and circa 299

Location: British Museum, Department of Asia, room G33

This stone relief depicts a scene from the Sibi Jataka, one of the many Buddhist Jataka tales that illustrate the Bodhisattva's past lives and selfless virtues. The story of King Sibi is a powerful example of generosity and sacrifice, where the compassionate king willingly gives away his own flesh to save a dove from a hungry hawk, embodying the Buddhist ideal of selflessness and compassion. The composition of the relief showcases intricate Gandhara-style craftsmanship, blending Hellenistic and Indian artistic influences, evident in the flowing drapery and realistic human expressions. The figures appear in dynamic poses,

with attendants, ascetics, and celestial beings witnessing the king's noble act. The presence of a scale-like structure in the scene likely symbolizes the balance between material sacrifice and spiritual merit. The artistic details, such as the expressions of the onlookers and the finely carved garments, add depth to the storytelling, emphasizing the moral lesson that true kingship lies in selfless service and the protection of all beings.

2) FORESTS AS SPACES FOR MEDITATION AND ASCETIC PRACTICE

In addition to exile, the Jatakas also depict the forest as a retreat for meditation and ascetic practices. For the Bodhisattvas in the stories, the forest becomes a sanctuary where they can engage in deep contemplation, away from the distractions of society. These retreats are crucial for their spiritual development and for the cultivation of virtues such as patience, equanimity, and wisdom.

MAHOSADHA JATAKA: MEDITATION AND THE WISDOM OF THE FOREST

The Mahosadha Jataka follows the story of the Bodhisattva, born as Mahosadha, who seeks refuge in the forest to meditate on human suffering and the nature of existence. Mahosadha retreats to the forest to engage in intense meditation, seeking to understand the suffering of the world and develop a deep sense of compassion. His time in the forest represents a profound engagement with the inner life, enabling him to confront his inner struggles and attain wisdom.

This story portrays the forest as a place of profound inner peace, offering a refuge for spiritual seekers who wish to achieve enlightenment through meditation. Mahosadha's meditation in the forest helps him gain clarity on the nature of suffering, impermanence, and the interdependence of all beings. In this sense, the forest is depicted not only as a physical space but also as a mental and spiritual landscape that fosters inner transformation.

Through his time in the forest, Mahosadha embodies the qualities of a true Bodhisattva: compassion, wisdom, and the deep understanding

3) FORESTS AS A PLACE OF MORAL TRIALS AND TESTING

Many Jataka stories feature the forest as a space where the Bodhisattva undergoes significant moral trials. These trials often test the Bodhisattva's character, commitment to compassion, and capacity for self-sacrifice. The forest, as a place of physical and spiritual hardship, challenges the Bodhisattva to cultivate virtues such as patience, humility, and generosity, which are central to the Buddhist path.

TAKKALI JATAKA: OVERCOMING DESIRE AND ATTACHMENT

In the Takkali Jataka, the Bodhisattva is tested through a series of moral challenges in the forest. He is confronted with intense physical suffering, including hunger and isolation, but he endures these trials with patience and composure. His time in the forest forces him to confront his desires and attachments, ultimately leading him to the realization that true happiness lies in renunciation and compassion, rather than in the pursuit of personal pleasure.

The forest in this story acts as a crucible for the Bodhisattva's inner transformation. It symbolizes the harsh realities of life and the necessity of overcoming worldly desires and attachments. The trials faced by the Bodhisattva in the forest mirror the challenges that practitioners of Buddhism face on their path toward enlightenment. The forest, in this sense, is a place that cultivates the virtues necessary for spiritual growth and moral clarity.



fig.3

This image appears to be a traditional Thai painting depicting a scene from the Takka Jataka, one of the many Jataka tales that illustrate moral lessons from the past lives of the Buddha. The setting includes a traditional Thai-style house, surrounded by a dark, forested area, with characters engaged in what seems to be a dramatic or moralistic event.

Forests in Buddhist Jataka tales serve as both spiritual retreats and moral testing grounds, symbolizing renunciation, transformation, and karmic consequence. In many stories, including the Takka Jataka, the forest is a place where virtues and vices are revealed, often leading to karmic justice. Monks and sages seek enlightenment in the solitude of the wilderness, while others face trials that determine their fate. The dark, eerie setting of the painting suggests a contrast between human civilization and the untamed natural world, reinforcing Buddhist teachings on karma and moral integrity. The depiction likely emphasizes that greed, deception, and harm lead to suffering, while wisdom and renunciation bring liberation, reflecting the core ethical lessons of the Jataka tales.

SANGHAMITTA JATAKA: ENDURANCE AND PATIENCE IN THE FOREST

In the Sanghamitta Jataka, the Bodhisattva, in the form of a monk, retreats to the forest to practice asceticism and endure physical hardships. He faces many challenges in the wilderness, including extreme weather, hunger, and exhaustion. However, through these trials, he develops profound patience and endurance, which are central qualities of the Bodhisattva path.

This story emphasizes the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity and the role of the forest in cultivating the necessary mental and spiritual fortitude to endure life's difficulties. Bodhisattva's endurance in the forest highlights the central Buddhist teaching of overcoming suffering through right effort and discipline. The forest, in this case, serves as the ideal setting for the development of patience, self-control, and resilience.



fig 4

This image is a famous depiction of Sanghamitta Theri, the daughter of Emperor Ashoka, arriving in Sri Lanka with a sapling of the sacred Bodhi tree. This event is a significant moment in Buddhist history, symbolizing the spread of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

The Bodhi tree, under which Buddha attained enlightenment, is central to Buddhist teachings. The tree in this image represents a direct link to the sacred tree in Bodh Gaya, emphasizing the role of forests in spiritual awakening.

In the Jatakas, cutting down forests or harming trees is often discouraged, showing early Buddhist environmental ethics. The act of bringing the Bodhi tree sapling in the image aligns with these teachings—promoting conservation and reverence for nature.

This painting not only portrays a historical event but also reflects deeper Buddhist values tied to nature, particularly the sacred role of trees and forests in sustaining spiritual and ecological harmony.

4) SYMBOLISM OF FORESTS IN THE JATAKAS

In the Jatakas, forests are not just physical spaces but are also laden with symbolic meaning. They represent the path of spiritual development, a space where worldly attachments can be relinquished, and higher virtues such as compassion, wisdom, and patience can be cultivated. The symbolism of the forest is central to the Buddhist understanding of the path toward enlightenment.

TREES AS SYMBOLS OF WISDOM AND INTERDEPENDENCE

Trees, often present in Jataka tales, serve as powerful symbols of wisdom, interconnectedness, and the nurturing qualities of nature. The Bodhi tree, under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, is perhaps the most prominent tree symbolizing the spiritual awakening that occurs in nature. In many Jataka tales, trees are depicted as spaces of shelter, meditation, and refuge, where the Bodhisattva receives spiritual insight.

In the Sibi Jataka, for instance, the king's act of self-sacrifice occurs under a tree, emphasizing the symbolism of trees as places of spiritual refuge and transformation. Similarly, in the Vessantara Jataka, the forest and its trees serve as symbols of the Bodhisattva's process of giving up worldly possessions and attachments.



fig 5

This image is a painting of Lord Buddha meditating under a tree, likely representing the Bodhi tree where he attained enlightenment. The serene expression on his face and the golden aura around him symbolize his spiritual wisdom and enlightenment. The surrounding figures appear to be celestial beings and demons, possibly referencing the temptation of Mara, a well-known episode in Buddhist tradition where negative forces attempted to distract Buddha from his meditation. The figures on the left seem aggressive, wielding weapons, while the ones on the right appear to be seducing or admiring him. This contrast highlights the struggle between material desires and spiritual awakening.

The lush greenery, flowers, and natural setting emphasize harmony with nature, reinforcing Buddhist ideals of peace and enlightenment. The intricate details and vibrant colors of the painting give it a divine, sacred feel, making it a powerful depiction of how forest setups have been the central for attaining peace and enlightenment in jatakas.

5) HISTORIOGRAPHY

The symbolism of the forest in the Jataka tales has been interpreted in various ways by scholars over time, reflecting both the physical and metaphysical roles the forest plays in Buddhist teachings. Early Buddhist interpretations often emphasized the forest as a space of meditation and enlightenment. The Buddha's retreat into the forest symbolizes the removal of worldly distractions. Rhys Davids (early Pali scholarship), Nyanatiloka (Buddhist monastic scholar), and H.L. Schmithausen has highlighted the forest's role in Buddhist ascetic practices and spiritual trials.

The forest often served as a testing ground for virtues like generosity and patience. Characters in jatakas are challenged by moral dilemmas that push them to demonstrate their adherence to dharma. A.K. Narain and Dineschandra Sircar have explored how the forest acts as a crucible for moral development in the Jataka tales.

In earlier tales, the forest is a place of danger, filled with wild animals, thieves, and other perils, symbolizing the chaotic aspects of nature. Scholars like Richard Gombrich discussed the forest's dual role as both a place of danger and spiritual growth in his work on early Buddhist literature.

The forest represented the impermanence (anicca) of nature, encapsulating both life and death. It reflected the Buddhist view of the world as transient and full of suffering (dukkha). Scholars like David J. Kalupahana has noted the duality of nature in Buddhist teachings, where the forest symbolizes both suffering and the potential for liberation.

Modern readings emphasize the forest as a harmonious space, aligning with Buddhist

ecological ethics and the interconnectedness of all beings. Modern scholars like Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi and Sujato Bhikkhu have contributed to discussions about Buddhism's ecological ethics, with the forest representing a natural environment where spiritual enlightenment and environmental stewardship intersect.

The forest in Jataka tales also aligns with broader Indian and South Asian cultural representations of the wilderness as a liminal, transformative space. Scholars like L.S. Cousins and Gregory Schopen have examined cross-cultural connections, particularly the symbolic role of forests in Indian epics like the Ramayana and how they resonate in Buddhist narratives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the symbolism of the forest in the Jataka tales is multi-dimensional, serving as a space of spiritual trial, moral testing, existential reflection, and ecological wisdom. From early Buddhist depictions of the forest as a place of solitude and meditation to later interpretations that explore the duality of nature and human existence, the forest remains a potent symbol in the Jataka tales. It is both a literal and metaphorical landscape, embodying key Buddhist teachings and offering a space for the transformative journey of enlightenment. As scholarship has evolved, so too has the understanding of the forest, encompassing not only the spiritual and moral dimensions but also environmental and ecological perspectives.

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We extend a warm invitation to you to become an integral part of the Dakshi Movement, a journey towards rediscovering the profound wisdom of our ancestors, a heritage that has often been overlooked and underestimated in the passage of time. Our mission is to revive the invaluable teachings of ancient times that have, unfortunately, faded away due to a lack of comprehension and reverence. By embracing these age-old notions, you not only enrich your understanding of the world and its history but also embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and enlightenment.

We urge you to join us in fostering a critical and analytical approach to integrating this ancient wisdom into the fabric of our modern lives. Together, we can create an environment where individuals collaborate and synergize their efforts, enhancing their comprehension of ancient knowledge and its profound relevance in today's world. If you are already acquainted with India's rich heritage of knowledge, we implore you to join us and awaken the spirits of those around you, inspiring them to delve into the depths of our cultural legacy.

Our vision extends beyond personal enrichment; it is about revitalizing Bharat as Vishwaguru, a beacon of wisdom and enlightenment. To achieve this, we must focus on nurturing our cultural roots, especially the culture of knowledge. In addressing the challenges of the contemporary world, the bridge between cultural antiquity and modernity is indispensable, and Dakshi Movement offers you the platform to establish this crucial connection.

If you take pride in your nation and hold steadfast faith in your cultural heritage, then this movement is tailored for you. It is an opportunity to not just preserve our legacy but to actively participate in its resurgence. Join us in this noble endeavor, as together, we embrace the wisdom of the ages and pave the way for a brighter, enlightened future.

Warm regards,

Akshit Kumar Bhadauria
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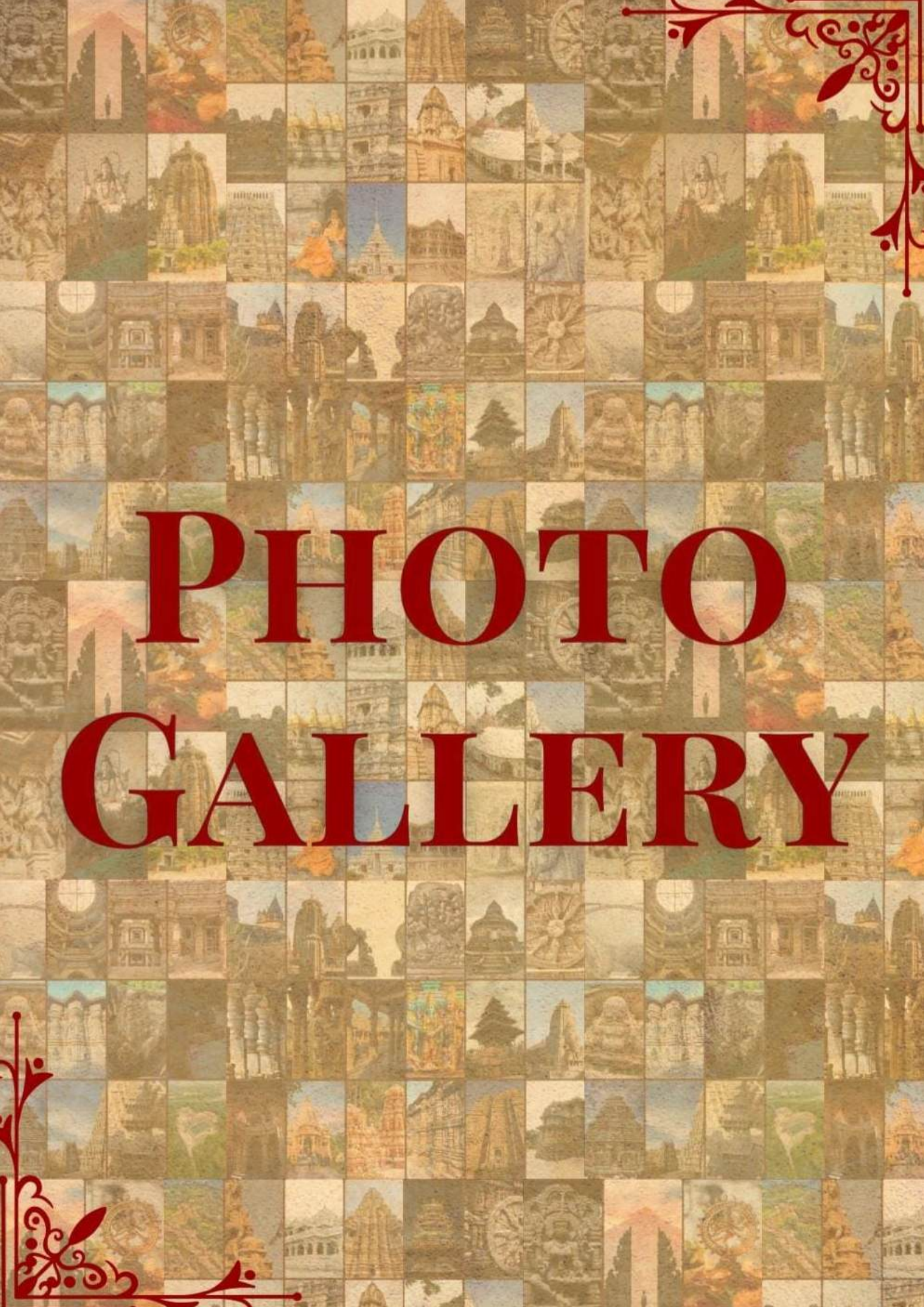
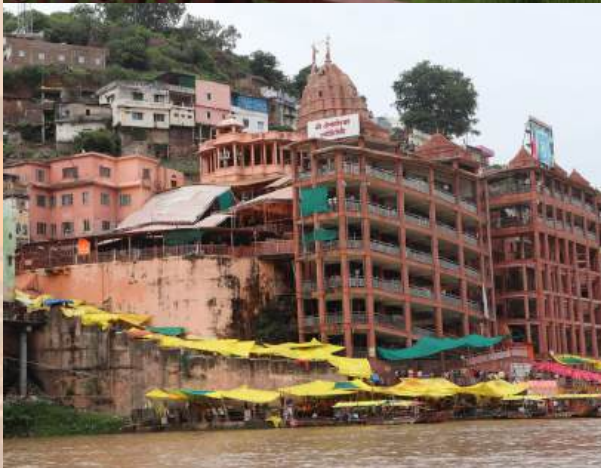


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