Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
BENGALURU KENDRA

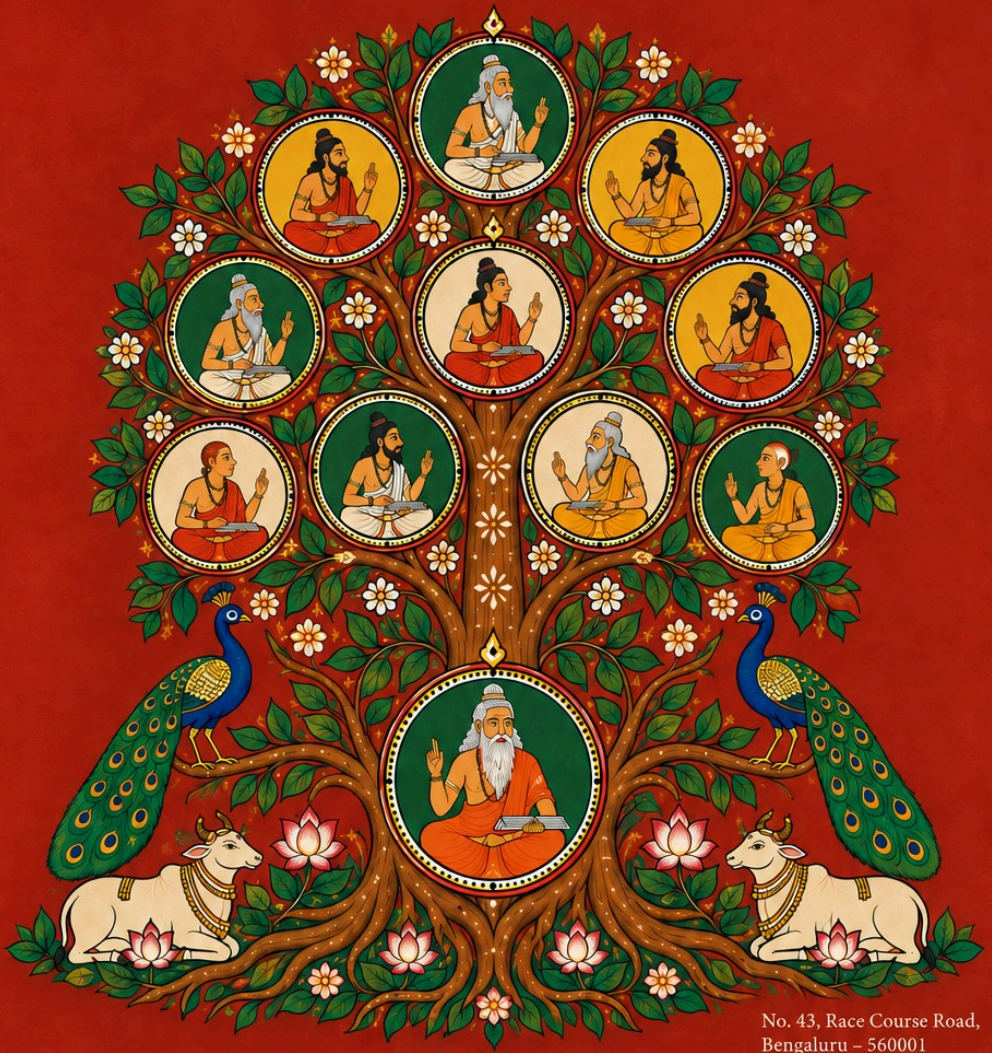
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DIAMOND JUBILEE
BENGALURU KENDRA

संस्कृति Vāni

Vol. 27 • Issue no. 7

THE VOICE OF CULTURE

July 2026



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MOTTO & MISSION

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

“Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.” — Rig Veda

◇

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was founded by Dr. K. M. Munshi in 1938 as a movement for the revitalisation of Indian culture — a home where education, the arts, scholarship, and value-based living could flourish together. From a single centre it has grown into a family of Kendras across India and the world, each carrying the same conviction: that culture is not a museum to be guarded, but a living stream to be shared.

The Bengaluru Kendra continues this work through lectures, music and dance, classical learning, publications, and the quiet daily companionship of a library and a community. As the Kendra marks its Diamond Jubilee, Saṁskṛti Vāṇi — “The Voice of Culture” — gathers the season’s reflections, events, and remembrances into a single page-turning record for members and friends.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

Turīya



K. G. RAGHAVAN
CHAIRMAN, BENGALURU
KENDRA

Dear Bhavanites:

DESCRIPTION OF TURIYA

"Turiya", a state of consciousness, defies description through the agency of the human mind. It has no attributes or conditioning. Therefore the seventh verse of the Mandukya Upanishad resorts to the unique descriptive method of "Neti; Neti ". It is the language of negation.

The premise informing this approach remains that the truth is smothered by several layers of illusion and can only be manifested when the sheaths of illusion are removed one by one. Truth exists independent of the sheaths and the attempt therefore is the removal of the sheaths.

The three other states of consciousness namely Vaisvanara i.e. waking state; Taijasa i.e. dream state; and Prajna i.e. deep sleep state are in some form connected with one another. But Turiya in transcending these, remains as a stand alone experience.

The moot question, then is why the Upanishad took the trouble of explaining the first three states of consciousness and did not come to the fourth state directly? The answer is quite obvious. The first three states are one which everybody experiences while this fourth one is unique. While none of the first three are permanent or Shasvata, the Turiya state of consciousness spells eternal bliss and there is no turning back.

CAUSE AND EFFECT DOCTRINE

Turiya is not created with the aid of the sense organs. It exists independent of any cause. In other words, Turiya is not the effect of any cause. But the question can still be raised as to whether anything can be perceived without a substratum.



Darkness does not leave the room. It was only ever the absence of the lamp.

If something has to be defined as true, there must be falsehood. So too, if one has to perceive light there must be darkness. And to know what is sweet, one has to taste bitter food. Without sorrow there is no joy. So can it be argued that the unreal cannot be understood without something being real in existence. The world is perceptible. But beyond the real world lies the one which is imperceptible through the sense organs. That is the state of Turiya.

But this logic is not accepted in the description of the Turiya state. In the Turiya state there is no relationship. With the Turiya realization, one is freed from craving for external objects. It is not the evolution from the state of Prajna. The world is unreal. This is the ultimate Advaita philosophy. There is no movement from one state to the Turiya state.

The fact of realisation of the desert negates the concept of a water. Non existence of water in a desert is realised the moment the existence of the desert is understood. The realisation of the existence of the desert destroys the misconception of water; so too the realisation of the self destroys the ignorance, desire, attachment etc.

If we switch on the light, automatically the dark room becomes lighted and darkness disappears. That is Turiya. Then how is a lighted room described? Obviously as a room which is not dark. But there is no cause and effect relationship between darkness and light.

DOCTRINE OF NETI NETI

This Neti Neti approach of describing a state of existence is found mentioned in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad.

तस्य हैतस्य पुरुषस्य रूपम्। यथा माहारजन वासः, यथा पाण्ड्- वाविकम्, यथेन्द्रगोपः, यथाग्न्यर्चिः, यथा पुण्डरीकम्, यथा सकृद्विद्युत्तम्; सकृद्विद्दात्तेव ह वा अस्य श्रीर्भवति य एवं वेद; अथात आदेशः नेति ,नेति न ह्येतस्मादिति नेत्यन्यत्परमस्ति; अथ नामधेयम् - सत्यस्य सत्यमिति; प्राणा वै सत्यम्, तेषामेष सत्यम् ।।

Tasya haitasya puruşasya rūpam. Yathā mahārajanam vāsah, yathā pandvāvikam, yathendragopah, yathāgnyarcih, yathā pundarikam, yathā sakrdvidyuttam, sakydvidyutteva ha vå asya śrirbhavati ya evam veda, athāta ädesah - neti neti, na hyetasmāditi netyanyat-paramasti; atha nämadheyam - satyasya satyamiti; pränä vai satyam, tesäm esa satyam.

“The form of that ‘being’ is as follows: Like a cloth dyed with turmeric, or like grey sheep's wool, or like the (scarlet) insect called Indragopa, or like a tongue of fire, or like a white lotus, or like a flash of lightning. He who knows it as such attains splendour like a flash of lightning. Now therefore the description (of Brahman): "Not this, not this" Because there is no other and more appropriate description than this ‘Not this.’ Now Its name: ‘Truth of truth.’ The vital force is truth, and it is the Truth of truth.”

In another verse of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad the concept of Neti Neti is expounded.

यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं पश्यति तदितर इतरं जिघ्रति, तदितर इतरं रसयते, तदितर इतरमभिवदति, तदितर इतरं शृणोति, तदितर इतर मनुते, तदितर इतरं स्पृशति, तदितर इतरं विजानाति; यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत्, तत्केन कं पश्येत्, तत्केन कं जिप्रेत, तत्केन कं रसयेत्, तत्केन कमभिवदेत्, तत्केन कं शृणुयात्, तत्केन कं मन्त्रीत, तत्केन कं स्पृशेत्, तत्केन कं विजानीयात्? येनेदं सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयात् ? स एष नेति नेत्यात्मा, अगृह्यो न हि गृह्यते, अशीर्यो न हि शीर्यते, असङ्गो न हि सज्जते, असितो न व्यथते, न रिष्यति, विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयात्, इत्युक्तानुशासनासि मैत्रेयि, एतावदरे खल्वमृतत्वमिति होक्त्वा याज्ञवल्क्यो विजहार ।।

Yatra hi dvaitam iva bhavati tat itara itaram pasyati, tat itara itaram jighrati, tat itara itaram rasayate, tat itara itaram abhivadati, tat itara itaram śṛṇoti, tat itara itaram manute, tat itara itarum spriati, tat itara itaram vijānāti, yatra tvasya sarvamātmaivābhüt, tat kena kam paśyet, tat kena kam jighret, tat kena kam rasayet, tat kena kam abhivadet, tat kena kam śrnuyāt, tat kena kam manvita, tat kena kam sprśet, tat kena kam vijānīyāt? Yenedam sarvam vijānāti tam kena vijānīyāt? Sa eşa neti neti ātmā, agṛhyo nahi grhyate, asiryo na hi siryate, asango na hi sajjate, asito na vyathate, na rişyati; vijñātāram are kena vijäntyät, ityuktānuśāsanāsi maitreyi, etävadare khalvamrtatvamiti hoktvā yājñavalkyo vijahāra.

If we switch on the light, automatically the dark room becomes lighted and darkness disappears. That is Turīya.

“Because when there is duality, as it were, then one sees something, one smells something, one tastes something, one speaks something, one hears something, one thinks something, one touches something, one knows something. But when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should one see and through what, what should one smell and through what, what should one taste and through what, what should one speak and through what, what should one hear and through what, what should one think and through what, what should one touch and through what, what should one know and through what? Through what should one know That owing to which all this is known? This Self is That which has been described as "Not this, not this". It is imperceptible, for It is never perceived; undecaying, for It never decays; unattached, for It is never attached; unfettered - It never feels pain, and never suffers injury. Through what, O Maitreyi, should one know the Knower? So you have got the instruction, Maitreyi. This much indeed is the means of immortality, my dear”. Saying this Yājñavalkya left.”

THE KARIKAS

On the 7th verse of this Upanishad, there are nine Karikas.



The last instruction to Maitreyī, and then he simply went.



Nine kārikās stand on a single verse of the Upaniṣad.

निवृत्ते सर्वदःखानामीशानः प्रभुरव्ययः ।

अद्वैतः सर्वभावानां देवस्तुर्यो विभुः स्मृतः ॥

nivrtte sarvaduhkhānāmiśānah prabhuravyayah,
advaitah sarvabhavanam devasturyo vibhuh smrtah.

"Turiya, the changeless Ruler, is capable of destroying all miseries. All other entities being unreal, the non dual Turiya alone is known as effulgent and all pervading."

The three states of consciousness are illusory. Truth will be known only when one realizes that the three states are nothing but Brahman, or Pure Consciousness I.e.Turiya. In Vivekachudamani, Adi Shankara sets out the twenty adjectives of the said Brahman.

अतः परं ब्रह्म सदद्वितीयं
विशुद्धविज्ञानघनं निरञ्जनम् ।
प्रशान्तमाद्यन्तविहीनमक्रियं
निरन्तरानन्दरसस्वरूपम् ॥

atah param brahma sadadvitīyam
viśuddhavijñānaghanam nirañjanam,
praśāntamādyantavihinamakriyam
nirantaranandarasasvarūpam.



Not a fourth thing alongside the three, but what the three were made of.



Three states are entered and left. The fourth has no edge to cross.

निरस्तमायाकृतसर्वभेदं
नित्यं सुखं निष्कलमप्रमेयम् ।
अरूपमव्यक्तमनाख्यमव्ययं
ज्योतिः स्वयं किञ्चिदिदं चकास्ति ॥

nirastamāyākṛtasarvabhedam
nityam sukham niṣkalamaprameyam,
arūpamavyaktamanākhyamavyayam
jyotih svayam kiñcididam cakāsti.

“Therefore, whatever is manifested is the supreme Brahma Itself-Real, non-dual, extremely pure, the essence of Knowledge Absolute, taintless, supremely peaceful, without beginning or end, beyond all activity, always of the nature of Bliss Absolute, transcending all diversities created by mâyä, eternal, the essence of joy, indivisible, immeasurable, formless, unmanifest, nameless, immutable and self effulgent.”

The visva, taijasa and Prajna states of consciousness are the result of cause and effect. In the first two the effect is directly the result of the cause i.e. the perception from the sense organs. The prajna state is no different. It is simply the fall out of the first two stages. Per contra in Turiya there is neither cause nor effect.



Vaiśvānara, Taijasa, Prājña — the three that everybody enters nightly.



Without falsehood there is no truth. The fourth needs no opposite.

कार्यकारणबद्धौ ताविष्येते विश्वतैजसौ ।

प्राज्ञः कारणबद्धस्तु द्वौ तौ तुर्ये न सिध्यतः ॥

karya-karana-baddhau tāvisyete viśva-taijasau,
prajñah karana-baddhastu dvau tau turye na sidhyatah.

"Visva and Taijasa are conditioned by cause and effect. Prajna is conditioned by cause alone. Neither cause nor effect exists in Turiya."

EXPOSITION OF SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

On the cause and effect theory as applicable to these three states of consciousness, Swami Chinmayananda provides an illuminating commentary.

"Cause is that state in which the effects are in it, but in a condition of unmanfestation. ...Visva or the waking state ego is conditioned by both cause and effect. The cause, here in the world of spirituality, is the 'ignorance'(avidya) of our real nature. Not knowing that we are the eternal and the immortal, the all pervading pure Consciousness, we have projected ourselves out of ourselves is to see a world of objects. And then, getting ourselves enmeshed in these objects, with our attachment and hatred, with our likes and dislikes towards them, we live the life of the waking state, perplexed, agitated and torn asunder between our life's sorrows and joys!

Thus, Visva can be considered as a poor victim of both cause, ignorance and its effect, the world of objects. To the dreamer, the Taijasa, certainly there is no world of outer objects but at the same time, it is conditioned by the quality and the set-up of things in the dreamworld. Therefore, Gaudapada states that Taijasa also is conditioned by both the cause (ignorance) and the effect (the world of plurality within the mind).

If both Viśva and Taijasa are thus conditioned by the cause and the effect, in what way is the Prajña, the 'sleeper' different from the 'waker' and the 'dreamer?' ...During the deep sleep state, we are not aware of any objects or any world of plurality. In deep sleep, we are aware only of one main negative homogeneous idea, 'I do not know'. A continuous unbroken thought of 'I do not know' is all that we know and, therefore, in the deep sleep state we experience nothing but ignorance. Ignorance of our Reality is, we have found, the cause of the entire world of mischief and misunderstanding, plurality and finitude. Therefore, the sleeper is conditioned by ignorance only and not by the effects of ignorance, namely, the waking and the dreamworld."



Beyond the real world lies the one imperceptible through the sense organs.



The moment the desert is seen for what it is, the water was never there.

Contrasting the aforesaid three states of consciousness with Turiya, the fourth state, Swamiji says,

"This is the theme of the stanza. It positively declares that the Turiya, the eternal is conditioned neither by the cause nor by the effect. As far as the fourth is concerned, neither the horrid nature nor the dress nor the parts of the physical structure are in it as its conditioning. In the fourth there is no ghost!

The superimposed ghost vision is illusory and an illusion cannot condition the Truth or the Reality. The waters of the mirage cannot wet even a single grain of sand in the desert. Similarly, none of the causes and effects, which are the conditionings upon the waker, dreamer and the deep sleeper can defile the Reality or Truth behind the three."

ॐ शान्तिः ॐ शान्तिः ॐ शान्तिः

K G Raghavan

CHAIRMAN · BENGALURU KENDRA

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

ā no bhadrāḥ kratavo yantu viśvataḥ

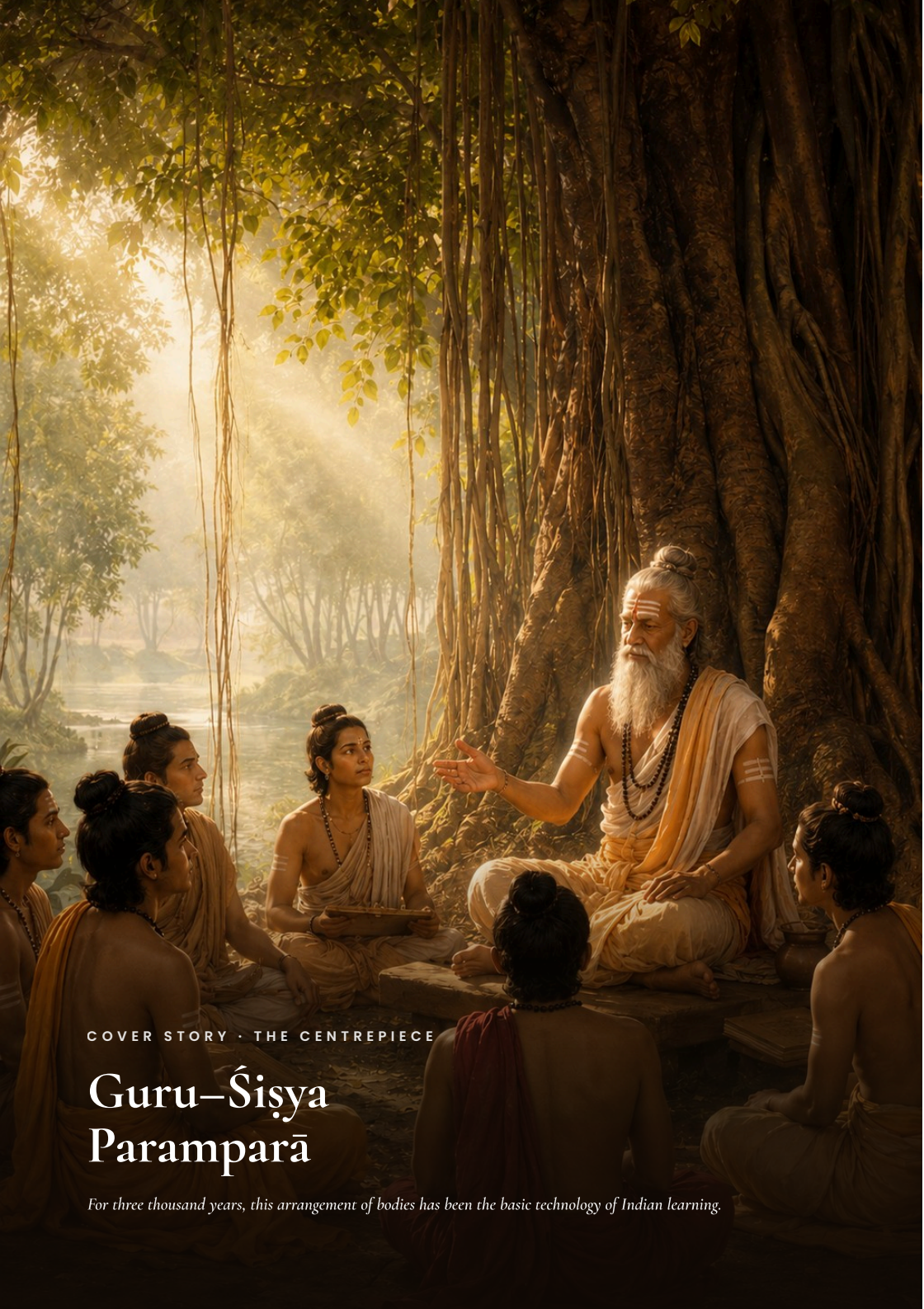
Let noble thoughts come to us from every side. The verse asks not for knowledge but for openness to it — and does not ask where it comes from.

ṚGVEDA I.89.1 · THE BHAVAN'S MOTTO

COVER STORY · THE CENTREPIECE

Guru–Śiṣya Paramparā

The unbroken line by which knowledge has passed from teacher to student for three thousand years — and what it asks of us now.



COVER STORY · THE CENTREPIECE

Guru–Śiṣya Paramparā

For three thousand years, this arrangement of bodies has been the basic technology of Indian learning.

THE CENTREPIECE · I

The Unbroken Line

What paramparā means, and why a full moon in July belongs to teachers.

CREATED AND COMPILED BY PRAKRITI

Every July, on the full moon of Āṣāḍha, Bhārata pauses to thank its teachers. Guru Pūrṇimā is among the oldest observances still kept in this land, and among the least ceremonious. It requires no procession and no temple. In most households the whole of it consists of going to see one's teacher.

What is being acknowledged is not a person but a line. The Sanskrit is *paramparā* — from *param*, the one beyond, and *para*, the one beyond that: a succession in which each link holds the next. The word describes a relay, not a hierarchy.

Knowledge in this tradition was never a possession. It was a deposit, held in trust, and the holder's obligation was to hand it on undiminished. A teacher who kept what he knew had failed at the one task the title carried.



The teaching posture has changed remarkably little in three millennia.



Before writing was trusted, the text survived only as long as someone remembered it.

Consider what the arrangement was actually solving. Before writing was trusted for sacred material — and in India it was distrusted for a very long time — a text existed only in the people who could say it. There was no archive to consult and no copy to check against. The text *was* the reciters.

That is a frightening kind of fragility. It also explains almost every feature of the guru–śiṣya relationship that looks strange to us now: the years of residence, the insistence on hearing rather than reading, the elaborate rites around beginning and ending study, the refusal to teach the unready.

None of it was ceremony for its own sake. It was quality control on a system whose only storage medium was human beings, and whose failure mode was permanent.

DID YOU KNOW?

A *śiṣya* is literally "one who is to be taught" — from √śās, to instruct. The same root gives us *śāstra*, a treatise.



On Guru Pūrṇimā the seat is prepared for the whole line, not for one person.

The relationship had a name for its two halves, and both were demanding.

The guru was required to be more than learned. The texts ask for *śrotriya* — one who has heard the Veda properly from his own teacher, in the line — and *brahmaniṣṭha*, one established in what he teaches. Learning alone was insufficient.

The śiṣya owed *śuśrūṣā* — literally the desire to hear. Not obedience, which is a later and coarser reading, but active attention.

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरुः साक्षात् परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

The guru is Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara; the guru is verily the supreme Brahman. To that guru, salutations.

GURU STOTRA

Where either half failed, the tradition held that transmission simply did not occur. Words might pass. The thing itself would not.

THE CENTREPIECE · II

Forest, Fire and the Gurukula

The oldest school in the world had no building, no syllabus and no fees.

The gurukula was not a school in any sense we would recognise. It was a household — ***kula*** — into which a boy was admitted, and in which he then lived for years as a member.

He rose before dawn. He fetched water and firewood, tended the sacred fire, grazed the cattle, and begged food for the household. Between these tasks he learnt. There was no timetable, because instruction happened when the teacher judged the student ready for the next thing.

The location was deliberate. Āśramas sat at the edge of settlement — near enough for alms, far enough for quiet. Distance from the market was understood as a condition of the work.

DID YOU KNOW?

The student's begging round, ***bhikṣā***, was not charity but curriculum: it taught a boy of any rank to stand at a stranger's door and ask.



Near enough for alms, far enough for quiet.



Upanayana: "leading near". The rite counted as a second birth.

Entry was marked by ***upanayana*** — literally "leading near", the taking of a boy to a teacher. The rite gave him the sacred thread and the Gāyatrī mantra, and it counted as a second birth. From it the upper three varṇas took the name ***dvija***, twice-born: once from parents, once from a teacher.

The second birth was reckoned the more consequential. The Manusmṛti says plainly that of the two, the birth conferred by the teacher is the higher, because it is the one that does not end at death.

Study ran for years — twelve was the conventional term for one Veda. It closed with ***samāvartana***, the return: a ritual bath, the shedding of the student's staff and girdle, and a formal address.

> **Of the two births, the tradition reckoned the one conferred by a teacher the higher — because it is the one that does not end at death.**

By about the sixth century BCE this domestic arrangement had begun to concentrate. **Takṣaśilā**, in the north-west, drew students from across the subcontinent; its earliest archaeological layers date to the fifth century BCE. Later, **Nālandā** was founded in the mid-fifth century CE under Kumāragupta I.

A caution worth making, since it is often lost. Takṣaśilā was not a university. There was no campus, no common syllabus, no examining body and no degree. It was a city where a great many distinguished teachers happened to live, and where a student attached himself to one of them.

Nālandā was a different animal — monastic, endowed, with halls and a library and an entrance examination. But it came a full millennium later.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nālandā's gate was guarded by a *dvāra-paṇḍita*, a scholar who questioned every arrival. Xuanzang records that most were turned away.



Nālandā, founded in the mid-fifth century CE, ran for roughly seven hundred years.

What the gurukula produced was not, in the first instance, information. It produced a person who had lived alongside someone who knew.

A syllabus can carry what is settled in a subject. It is much worse at carrying judgment — where the subject is uncertain, which questions are worth asking, what a practitioner does when the rule does not fit the case in front of him.

That kind of knowledge has no compact form. It transmits only by proximity, over time, through watching someone work and being corrected. The gurukula's answer was blunt and expensive: put the student in the house for twelve years.

A syllabus can carry what is settled in a subject. It is much worse at carrying judgment.



The teacher at work; the student beside him, watching.





Some knowledge has no compact form. It transmits only by proximity.



THE CENTREPIECE

The Pāṭhaśālā

The method is unchanged. The accuracy is verifiable.

THE CENTREPIECE · III

Why Vyāsa

Guru Pūrṇimā is also Vyāsa Pūrṇimā. The choice of the first teacher tells you what the tradition values.

He is Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana — the dark one, born on an island. *Vyāsa* is not a name but a title, and it means the arranger, the one who divided.

The tradition credits him with an implausible body of work: the division of the Vedas, the Mahābhārata, the Brahma Sūtras, the Purāṇas. Modern scholarship reads "Vyāsa" as a lineage of redactors rather than one man.

The tradition would not find this troubling. A paramparā is precisely a thing that outlives the person who begins it, and a title that passes down a line of arrangers is the idea working exactly as advertised.

DID YOU KNOW?

Vyāsa is one of the *cirañjīvī*, the deathless. A new Vyāsa appears in every age — the office endures, not the man.



Gaṇeśa agreed to write only if the poet never paused.

The act attributed to him is the interesting part.

Faced with a corpus grown too large for any single memory, he did not compose. He divided — into Ṛg, Yajus, Sāman and Atharvan — and gave each to a student to hold: Paila, Vaiśampāyana, Jaimini, Sumantu. Each then taught his own disciples, and the branches multiplied into the *śākhās*.

Read it as a design decision and it is remarkable. The first act of the first teacher was not revelation but distribution. He took something that depended entirely on one extraordinary person and spread it across four, then sixteen, then hundreds — so that no single death could take the whole.

The first act of the first teacher was not revelation but distribution.



Ṛg to Paila, Yajus to Vaiśampāyana, Sāman to Jaimini, Atharvan to Sumantu.



One branch of four.



Four branches, each given to one student to hold.

The day carries three commemorations, layered across centuries.

For the Vedic tradition it is Vyāsa Pūrṇimā. For Buddhists it marks the first sermon at Sārnāth, when the Buddha found his five former companions and taught them. For Jains it is the day Mahāvīra accepted Gautama Svāmī as his first disciple.

Three traditions, three founders, and in every case the same event is being marked: not the moment of realisation, but the moment it stopped being private and became teachable. The tradition does not celebrate enlightenment. It celebrates the decision to explain.

DID YOU KNOW?

The day opens *cāturmāsya*, the four monsoon months when wandering monks stay put — and so became the season for sustained study.



Sārnāth, where the Buddha first taught — the same full moon.

THE CENTREPIECE · IV

The Rituals of Transmission

Five rites mark a life of learning. Each one does a specific job.

Indian tradition ritualises the beginning and end of study more elaborately than almost anything else in a person's life, and the rites are not decorative. Each marks a transfer of responsibility.

It starts absurdly early. **Akṣarābhyāsa** — the first letters — is performed when a child is around three. The child's finger is guided through rice or sand to form the first characters. In Karnataka the rite is commonly held at a Sarasvatī temple, or at home before her image.

The medium is deliberate. Rice and sand do not keep a record. The first writing a child does is writing that will be erased — the point being the hand, not the result.

DID YOU KNOW?

Vijayadaśamī is the traditional day to begin study. Musicians and dancers still place their instruments before the goddess that morning.



The first writing a child does is writing that will be erased.



Guru-vandana still opens every class in a music or dance school.

Vidyārambha follows: the formal commencement of learning, at about five. **Upanayana**, at eight or later, gives the thread and the Gāyatrī and opens Vedic study proper.

Then the daily rites. **Pādapūjā** — the washing of the teacher's feet — is the one modern readers find hardest, and it repays a second look. The gesture is not submission. In a tradition that treats the body as ranked from head to foot, the student begins at the point furthest from the teacher's eminence, and works from there.

Guru-vandana opens every class in a music or dance school still. The instrument is touched to the forehead before it is played. The dancer touches the floor, then her own eyes.

The instrument is touched to the forehead before it is played. The dancer touches the floor, then her own eyes.

Closing the relationship required its own rite, and it is the strangest and most telling of all: **gurudakṣiṇā**, the fee.

It was paid at the end, not at the beginning. Its amount was not fixed. And, critically, it was named by the teacher — which meant that until the teaching was complete, neither party knew what the price would be.

The tradition is careful never to let it be simply money. Sāndīpani asked for a son lost at sea. Droṇa asked Ekalavya for his right thumb. That the tradition preserved the Ekalavya story — in which the teacher's demand is transparently self-serving — is a mark of unusual honesty.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Taittirīya tells the graduating student to bring the teacher *priyaṁ dhanam* — "the wealth he holds dear", deliberately unspecified.



Gurudakṣiṇā was named by the teacher, at the end, and was never simply money.



The oldest convocation address in the world, still recited.

Samāvartana closed it. The student bathed, put off the staff, girdle and deerskin of studenthood, dressed as a householder, and was addressed. That address survives — the oldest convocation speech in the world.

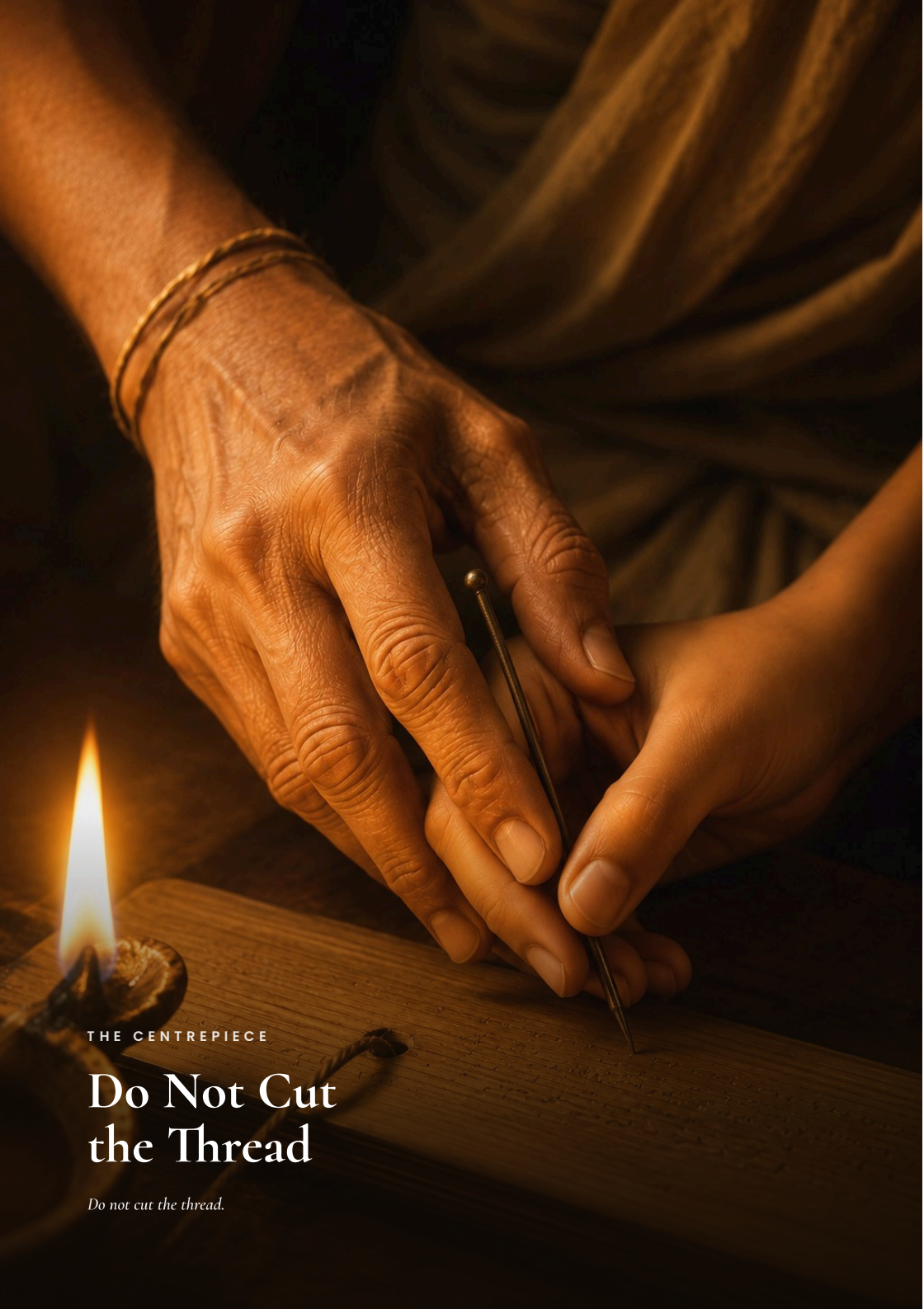
सत्यं वद । धर्मं चर । स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः ।
आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य प्रजातन्तुं मा
व्यवच्छेत्सीः ॥

Speak the truth. Walk in dharma. Do not neglect your own study. Having brought the teacher the wealth he holds dear, do not cut the thread of progeny.

TAITTIRĪYA UPANIṢAD I.11

Note the order. Truth first. Conduct second. Only then the instruction not to abandon ***svādhyāya*** — the reading a person does when the teacher is no longer there.

And it closes on ***prajā-tantuṁ mā vyavacchetsīḥ***: do not cut the thread. The thread is the family line, and it is also the line of transmission itself. Three thousand years later the same sentence is still said over a departing student.



THE CENTREPIECE

Do Not Cut the Thread

Do not cut the thread.

THE CENTREPIECE · V

The Engineering of Memory

How do you transmit a text for three thousand years without writing it down?

A tradition that entrusts its scripture to human memory faces one hard problem: memory drifts. Words shift. A syllable dropped in one generation is invisible in the next.

Every oral tradition in the world has this problem, and most simply live with it — which is why oral epics elsewhere exist in many divergent versions.

India refused to live with it. The Vedic schools built, over centuries, a set of recitation patterns designed to make drift audible. They are called the ***pāṭhas***, and taken together they constitute one of the oldest error-correcting systems ever devised.

Most oral traditions live with drift. India built a system to make it audible.



The pāṭhas are among the oldest error-correcting systems ever devised.

There are eleven modes in all: three natural and eight artificial.

The three *prakṛti* modes are the straightforward ones. **Saṁhitā-pāṭha** is the text as continuous speech. **Pada-pāṭha** separates every word, undoing the euphonic joins. **Krama-pāṭha** recites in overlapping pairs: 1-2, 2-3, 3-4.

Then come the eight *vikṛti*. In **jaṭā-pāṭha**, the braided recitation, each pair is spoken forward, backward, forward. In **ghana-pāṭha**, the densest, the pattern runs 1-2, 2-1, 1-2-3, 3-2-1, 1-2-3 — then moves on by one word and does it again.

THE ELEVEN PĀṬHAS

Prakṛti (natural) — Saṁhitā · Pada · Krama

Vikṛti (altered) — Jaṭā · Mālā · Śikhā · Rekhā · Dhvaja · Daṇḍa · Ratha · Ghana

A reciter who masters the last is titled **Ghanapāṭhī**.



Eleven modes: three natural, eight altered.

Now see what this buys. If a word slips out of place, the pattern breaks audibly. If a syllable is lost, the permutations no longer align. Every word is checked against its neighbours from both directions, repeatedly.

The cost is enormous. Ghana-pāṭha takes many times as long as plain recitation, and mastering it is a life's work. The tradition paid that cost willingly for three thousand years.

And it also preserved the *accent*. Vedic Sanskrit is pitch-accented — *udātta*, *anudātta*, *svarita* — and the accent is meaning-bearing. The pāṭhas preserve not only which words, but on what pitch.

DID YOU KNOW?

UNESCO inscribed the tradition of Vedic chanting on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008.



Vedic Sanskrit is pitch-accented, and the accent carries meaning.



The oral system outperformed the written one. The tradition knew it.

For centuries the tradition regarded writing the Veda down as a step backwards. On the evidence, it had a point.

There is a temptation, in a magazine like this one, to overclaim here. Let us not.

It is sometimes said that recitations gathered from schools at opposite ends of India prove word-perfect identity across three millennia. What can be said with confidence is narrower and still extraordinary: the Rgveda as recited today shows remarkably little variation between widely separated schools, far less than any manuscript tradition of comparable age.

Manuscript copying, by contrast, degrades. Every scribe introduces errors, and the errors compound down the generations. The Vedic solution outperformed writing — which is precisely why, for centuries, the tradition regarded committing the Veda to script as a step backwards.

THE CENTREPIECE · VI

Who Is a Guru, Who Is a Śiṣya

Both words are technical terms. Neither means what it has come to mean.

Guru means heavy. That is its plain sense in Sanskrit — weighty, grave, carrying mass. The word for teacher is the word for a thing with substance to it.

The popular etymology, from the Guru Gītā, splits it into *gu*, darkness, and *ru*, the remover. This is theologically satisfying and linguistically doubtful. Both readings are worth knowing, and it is worth knowing which is which.

The formal requirements are two. A guru must be *śrotriya* — one who has heard the text properly from a teacher within the line. And he must be *brahmaniṣṭha* — established in it, having made it his own.

DID YOU KNOW?

The *ācārya* teaches the whole Veda; the *upādhyāya* a portion, for a living. Only the *guru* takes responsibility for the person.



Guru means heavy. The word for teacher is the word for a thing with substance.

The student's side is defined just as carefully, and the key term is ***adhikāra*** — fitness, entitlement, readiness.

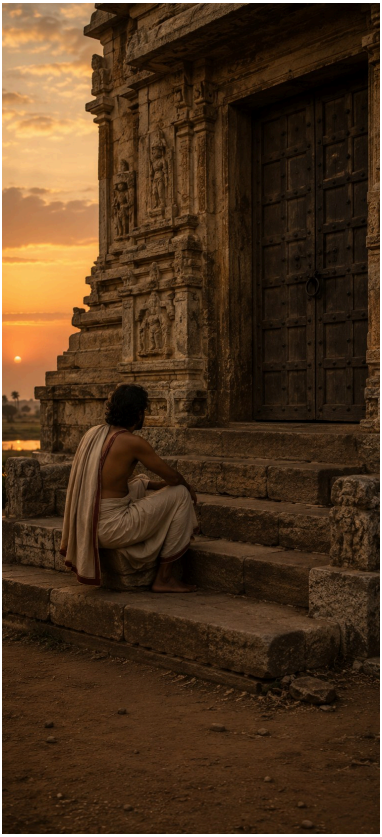
Adhikāra is not talent and it is not enthusiasm. It is the condition of being ready to receive a particular teaching such that it will actually take. A teaching given to someone without adhikāra is held to be wasted at best and harmful at worst.

This is why the tradition tolerates, even admires, teachers who refuse. When Goṣṭhīpūrṇa made Rāmānuja walk to Tirukkoṣṭiyūr five times before giving him the mantra, the walking was the test.

Adhikāra is not talent and it is not enthusiasm. It is the condition of being ready to receive a teaching such that it will take.



The seat swept, the water set ready — adhikāra is a condition, not a talent.





Rāmānuja walked to Tirukkoṣṭiyūr five times. The walking was the test.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa contains the tradition's most radical answer, and it is worth setting against everything above. Asked to name his guru, the avadhūta Dattātreya names twenty-four — and not one of them is a person.

The earth taught him patience, for it bears all things and does not complain. The wind taught him to move among all objects and be stained by none. The honeybee, gathering from many flowers, taught him to take the essence from every teaching and never quarrel over the source. The moth flying into the flame taught him what beauty does to the unguarded.

A FEW OF THE TWENTY-FOUR

Earth patience under burden · **Wind** moving unattached · **Sky** touched by nothing · **Ocean** unchanged by what enters · **Moth** destroyed by what attracts · **Honeybee** the essence, not the flower · **Python** take what comes · **Child** unselfconscious joy
— Bhāgavata Purāṇa XI.7–9



Twenty-four teachers, not one of them human.



"As the bee gathers from many flowers, so should the wise take the essence from every teaching."

The lineage is guarded, formal and exacting. It is also, in its own scripture, entirely beside the point.

Dattātreya's list is a quiet correction to the whole apparatus.

Read alongside the requirements of śrotriya and brahmaniṣṭha, the rites of upanayana and dakṣiṇā, the eleven pāṭhas and the twelve-year residence, it says something the rest of the tradition rather needed to hear: that a teacher is not a credential.

A teacher is anything that shows you something you would not have seen alone. And the student who cannot learn from a bee is unlikely to learn much from a sage either.

The tradition keeps both positions, and does not resolve them. It is not often noticed that a scripture willing to undercut its own institutions in this way is displaying considerable confidence.



THE CENTREPIECE

The Four Seats

Four seats at the four quarters. Twelve centuries later, all four are still occupied.

THE CENTREPIECE · VII

The Wealth That Cannot Be Stolen

What Indian tradition thought education was for — and it was never a career.

Bhartṛhari, writing perhaps in the fifth century, put the case as directly as anyone has.

विद्या नाम नरस्य रूपमधिकं प्रच्छन्नगुप्तं धनम् ।

Knowledge is a man's finest form, a treasure hidden and secure.

BHARTṚHARI · NĪTIŚATAKAM

The verse goes on: knowledge is the eye that sees where the eyes cannot, it wins respect abroad, it cannot be seized by kings or divided among heirs, it grows by spending and is not diminished by theft.

The last clause is the sharp one, and it is an economic argument. Every other form of wealth in a pre-modern society was confiscable. Land could be taken. Gold could be stolen. Cattle could be driven off. Learning, alone, could not.



"A treasure hidden and secure" — the one asset a king could not seize.

The tradition's second claim about education is stranger and more demanding: that its first product is humility.

विद्या ददाति विनयम् ।

Knowledge bestows humility.

HITOPADEŚA

The full verse builds a chain: knowledge gives humility, humility gives worthiness, worthiness gives wealth, wealth enables dharma, and dharma gives happiness. Note that it runs the opposite way to our intuition.

The verse says the first thing real learning produces is a reliable sense of how much one does not know. By this measure, an education that leaves a person more certain has failed.



An education that leaves a person more certain has failed.



Knowledge gives humility; humility, worthiness.



Knowledge grows by spending.

Who could learn? The honest answer is that access narrowed over time, and the tradition's own texts record the narrowing. The Vedic period shows women composing hymns and disputing in public assembly. By the age of the Dharmaśāstras, formal Vedic study had been restricted by both birth and sex, and the restriction was enforced.

But India never had one educational system. Alongside the Vedic schools ran the Buddhist and Jain saṅghas, which admitted by aptitude. The Bhakti movements taught in the vernacular to anyone who would listen. The guild traditions transmitted through family and workshop lines entirely their own.

WHAT RAN ALONGSIDE

Buddhist & Jain saṅghas — from the 6th c. BCE, admitted by aptitude
Bhakti lineages — vernacular, open; the Anubhava Maṇṭapa, 12th c.
Guild and family lines — sthāpatya, Āyurveda, music, textile
Sufi silsilās — from the 12th c., the same structure



India never had one educational system. It had several, running at once.



"The higher is that by which the imperishable is known." — Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad I.1.4–5

The Muṇḍaka lists the four Vedas themselves under lower knowledge. It is a remarkable thing for a scripture to say about its own scriptures.

There is one more claim, and it is the largest.

The Upaniṣads distinguish *parā vidyā* from *aparā vidyā* — higher and lower knowledge. The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad lists the lower: the four Vedas themselves, phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, metre, astronomy. All of it, the text says, is lower. The higher is that by which the imperishable is known.

This is a remarkable thing for a scriptural text to say about its own scriptures. The purpose of all that machinery was never the machinery. It was to bring a person to the point where the question could be asked properly.

THE CENTREPIECE · VIII

The Woman in the Lineage

She is there from the beginning — arguing in open assembly, composing hymns, and being written out later.

The Ṛgveda names women among its composers. The tradition calls them ***ṛṣikās***, and the hymns attributed to them include Lopāmudrā's dialogue with Agastya, Ghoṣā's verses, Apālā's, Viśvavārā's, Romaśā's.

They are not marginal figures added later. They are in the oldest layer of the oldest text.

The Harīta Dharmasūtra distinguishes two classes of women: ***brahmavādinī***, who took the thread and pursued lifelong Vedic study, and ***sadyodvāhā***, who married. That the first needed a name is itself the evidence.

DID YOU KNOW?

Brahmavādinī means "one who speaks of Brahman" — the same word as the masculine, with no qualification.



The Ṛgveda names women among its composers, in the oldest layer of the oldest text.

She asks what the worlds are woven upon. He answers. She asks what that is woven upon.

The great set-piece is at Janaka's court, in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.

The king assembles the learned and offers a thousand cows to the greatest among them. Yājñavalkya has the cattle driven to his house *before* the debate, and is then obliged to defend the claim against all comers.

The challenger who comes closest to unseating him is **Gārgī Vācaknavī** — a woman, questioning in open assembly, with no apology made for her presence and none asked. She asks what the worlds are woven upon. He answers. She asks what *that* is woven upon. He answers. She continues.



Gārgī Vācaknavī questioning Yājñavalkya before the assembly.

What she does next is the point. She sits down — and then rises a second time, telling the assembly she has two more questions and will loose them like arrows. This time he answers fully, on the imperishable. And Gārgī turns to the hall and tells them plainly that none of them will beat him.

She is not defeated. She adjudicates.

Yājñavalkya's other great dialogue is with his wife **Maitreyī**, and it is she who asks the question that shapes it: if the whole earth filled with wealth were hers, would it make her immortal? He says it would not. She replies — what use is it to me, then? Teach me what you know.

THE WOMEN OF THE LINEAGE

Ṛgvedic ṛṣikās — Lopāmudrā, Ghoṣā, Apālā, Viśvavārā, Romaśā
Gārgī Vācaknavī — Bṛhadāraṇyaka III.6, III.8
Maitreyī — Bṛhadāraṇyaka II.4, IV.5
Akka Mahādevi — 12th c., Kannada vacanas
Āṇḍāḷ — the only woman among the twelve Āḻvārs



"What use is it to me, then? Teach me what you know."

The thread does not break; it moves.

When formal Vedic study closed to women, the transmission continued in the Bhakti lineages, which were vernacular and largely indifferent to qualification. **Akka Mahādevi** wrote vacanas in Kannada in the twelfth century that are among the finest poetry in the language. **Āṇḍāḷ** stands as the only woman among the twelve Āḻvārs.

And in the classical arts the female line was never interrupted at all. The ***bāṇī*** of a dance lineage has passed mother to daughter, guru to śiṣyā, without a break.

This is why Bhavan Kalābhārati's Kuchipudi classes are taught by Prateeksha Kashi, who learnt from her mother and guru, Vyjayanthi Kashi. The line is not a metaphor. It is a family.

The thread does not break. It moves.





Akka Mahādevi — the thread does not break; it moves.



Guru to śiṣyā, without a break.



THE CENTREPIECE

The Thread Moves

“Teach me what you know.”

THE CENTREPIECE · IX

Keeping the Thread Today

The paramparā is not only history. It is running, right now, in several places — and it can be kept at home.

Where does an unbroken line actually survive in 2026? In three places, and they are not the ones usually named.

In music. The *gharānā* preserves not compositions but a manner of approaching a rāga — a way of taking a phrase that cannot be notated and must be heard. A Gwalior phrase and a Kirana phrase differ in ways no score records.

In dance. The *bāṇī* does the same for movement: the Pandanallur line, the Vazhuvoor, the Kalakshetra. A dancer's teacher is legible in her body to anyone who knows how to look.

In Āyurveda, sthāpatya and the crafts, where a codified body of knowledge sits alongside an uncodifiable practice.



A phrase taken by ear, not from a score. This is what a gharānā actually preserves.



One of the few observances performed for an empty seat.

It would be comfortable to stop there, with the tradition admired and safely in the hands of specialists. The harder question is what a paramparā asks of a household that has no guru and no gharānā.

The answer the tradition gives is smaller than expected, and it is domestic.

Guru Pūrṇimā itself is the model. A low seat is covered with white cloth. Twelve marks of sandal paste are drawn on it, and the line of teachers is invoked upon them — Vyāsa first, then downward, to one's own. If a living teacher is present, he sits there instead. If not, the seat holds the line.

DID YOU KNOW?

Called *Vyāsa Pūjā*, it is one of the very few Hindu rites performed for an empty seat. The honour is to the line, not the occupant.

Five small things, then, that any household can keep. None requires a priest.

Mark the day. On the Āṣāḍha full moon, name your teachers aloud — school teachers included. **Reach one of them.** A letter or a call to a teacher who has not heard from you in years. This is the whole of the festival, done properly.

Keep akṣarābhyāsa. When a child in the house turns three, guide the finger through rice. **Touch the instrument first** — before practice, the vīṇā, the bells, the books. **Read something old, slowly.** *Svādhyāya* is the one duty in the Taittirīya list that needs no second person.

A letter to a teacher who has not heard from you in years. That is the whole of the festival, done properly.



None of it requires a priest.



A class at the Bhavan, Bengaluru. The line continues.

Something real is at stake in whether this survives, and it is not sentiment.

A syllabus carries information. It is much worse at carrying judgment. The student who has only read a subject knows what is settled in it. The student who has sat with a practitioner knows something else — where it is uncertain, which questions are worth asking, what to do when the rule does not fit the case.

That is what Guru Pūrṇimā honours, and it needs no gurukula. It needs only that someone who knows is willing to sit with someone who does not, for longer than is efficient.

प्रजातन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः ।

Do not cut the thread.

TAITTIRĪYA UPANIṢAD I.11

Three thousand years of apparatus — the pīṭhas, the maṭhas, the eleven pāṭhas, the gharānās, this magazine — is scaffolding built around that one meeting, to make it happen again next year.

तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ।

tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

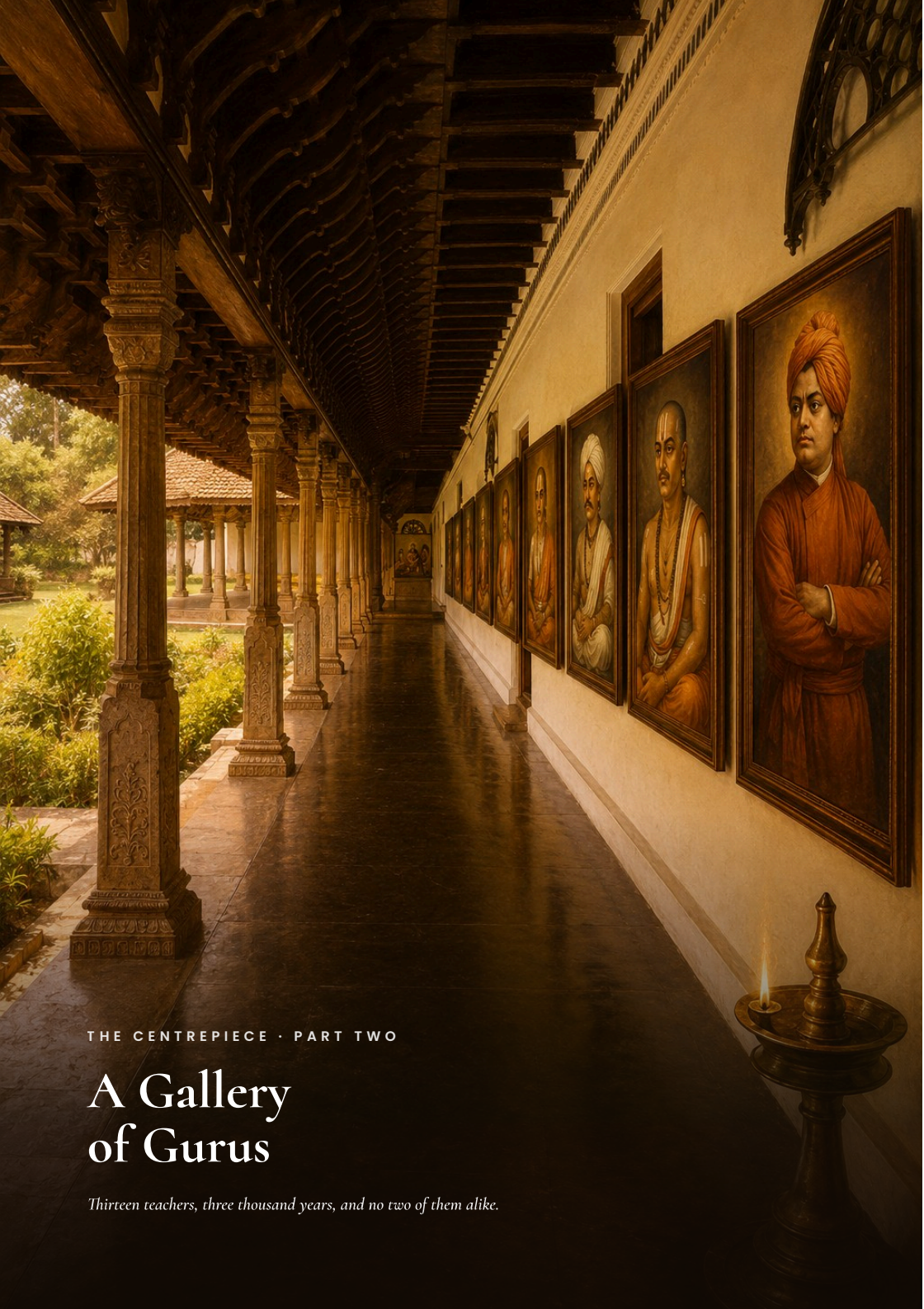
To that guru, salutations. The line closes the Guru Stotra, and is said not to one teacher but to the whole succession standing behind him.

GURU STOTRA

THE CENTREPIECE · PART TWO

A Gallery of Gurus

Thirteen teachers, from the arranger of the Vedas to the founder of this Bhavan — a demonstration that the line has never once been broken.



THE CENTREPIECE · PART TWO

A Gallery of Gurus

Thirteen teachers, three thousand years, and no two of them alike.

GALLERY · I

Vedavyāsa

The Ādi Guru · Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana

He is called Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana — the dark one born on an island — and *Vyāsa* is a title he earned: the arranger, the one who divided.

Faced with a corpus too large for any one memory, he divided it four ways and gave each part to a student — Paila, Vaiśampāyana, Jaimini, Sumantu — so that no single death could destroy the whole.

Modern scholarship reads the name as a lineage of redactors rather than one man. The tradition would not object: a paramparā is precisely a thing that outlives whoever begins it.

> The first teacher's first act was not to speak, but to distribute.



Vyāsa dictating. The office, not the man, is what the tradition calls permanent.



Dattātreya, who took the whole world as his teacher.

GALLERY · II

Dattātreya

The guru of twenty-four gurus

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa gives Dattātreya the strangest and most instructive answer in the literature. Asked to name his guru, he names twenty-four — and not one of them is a person.

The earth taught him patience, for it bears all things without complaint. The python, which eats what comes and does not hunt, taught contentment. The moth flying into the flame taught him what beauty does to the unguarded.

The list is a quiet correction to the whole idea of lineage. A teacher is not a credential. A teacher is anything that shows you something you would not have seen alone.

DID YOU KNOW?

An *avadhūta* has shaken off all convention. The tradition sets Dattātreya outside every lineage, and makes him teacher to all of them.

GALLERY · III

Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra

The teacher, and the rival who became one

Vasiṣṭha is the ideal: a ṛṣi of the Ṛgveda's seventh maṇḍala, teacher to Rāma, composed and unshakable.

Viśvāmitra is the counter-example, and the more interesting figure. He begins as a king who wants what Vasiṣṭha has, tries to take it by force, and fails. He then spends an age in austerities to become a brahmarṣi by merit rather than birth — and succeeds. The title is conferred, in the end, by Vasiṣṭha himself.

The tradition keeps both stories, and keeps them together. One says the teacher is born. The other says the teacher is made, by anyone willing to pay the price.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Gāyatrī, given to every student at upanayana, is Viśvāmitra's. The outsider's verse became the tradition's front door.



One says the teacher is born. The other says the teacher is made.

GALLERY · IV

Sāndīpani

Who taught Kṛṣṇa

At Ujjain, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were sent to the āśrama of Sāndīpani, and the Bhāgavata makes a point of how ordinary their time there was. They gathered firewood. They fetched water. They studied alongside a poor boy named Sudāma.

The frame is the interesting part: the incarnation of Viṣṇu is shown submitting to a human teacher and doing chores.

The gurudakṣiṇā episode closes it. Asked what he wanted, Sāndīpani requested the return of a son lost at sea. Kṛṣṇa went to Yama and brought the boy back. The fee is set by the teacher, and it is never money.

Even the avatāra was sent to school, and made to carry the firewood.



Firewood and water before study — the chores were the curriculum.



Kṛṣṇa and Sudāma at the āśrama in Ujjain — the god as a student like any other.



The chores were the curriculum.

GALLERY · V

Droṇa and Ekalavya

The story the tradition tells against itself

Not every guru in the literature is admirable, and the Mahābhārata is unusual among scriptures in saying so plainly.

Ekalavya, a forest-dweller, comes to Droṇa and is refused — he is not of the right birth. He goes away, makes a clay image of Droṇa, and practises before it until he surpasses every prince at Hastināpura. When Droṇa discovers this, he demands as gurudakṣiṇā the boy's right thumb.

Ekalavya gives it without hesitation, and his archery is finished. The text does not soften the story. Droṇa acts to protect Arjuna's pre-eminence, and the narrator lets us see the motive.

DID YOU KNOW?

The tradition kept this episode for two and a half thousand years rather than drop it — a standing warning about lineages that guard privilege.



Ekalavya, ready to offer his thumb to his guru.



Gārgī Vācaknavī questioning Yājñavalkya at the court of Janaka.

GALLERY · VI

Yājñavalkya and Gārgī

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

King Janaka assembles the learned of his kingdom and offers a thousand cows to whoever is greatest among them. Yājñavalkya has the cattle driven to his house before the debate begins, and is then obliged to defend the claim.

The challenger who nearly unseats him is **Gārgī Vācaknavī**, questioning in open assembly without any apology for her presence. She asks what the worlds are woven upon, and on the answer, and on that answer again — a regress designed to find where he runs out.

He stops her with a warning. She sits, then rises a second time with two more questions, calling them arrows — and when he has answered, she tells the assembly that none of them will beat him. She is not defeated. She adjudicates.

GALLERY · VII

Ādi Śaṅkara

And Govinda Bhagavatpāda · covered in full, May 2026

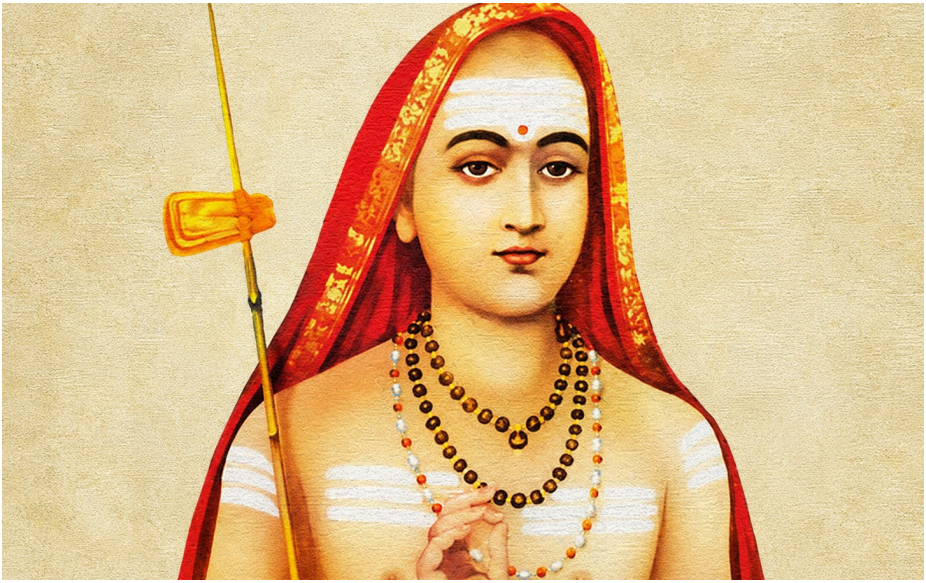
Śaṅkara left Kālaḍi as a boy and walked north to the Narmadā, where he found Govinda Bhagavatpāda in a cave and asked to be accepted. Asked who he was, he answered with the Nirvāṇa Ṣaṭkam — six verses saying what he was not.

Within some twenty years he had written commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Brahma Sūtras, walked the length of the subcontinent debating, and died at thirty-two.

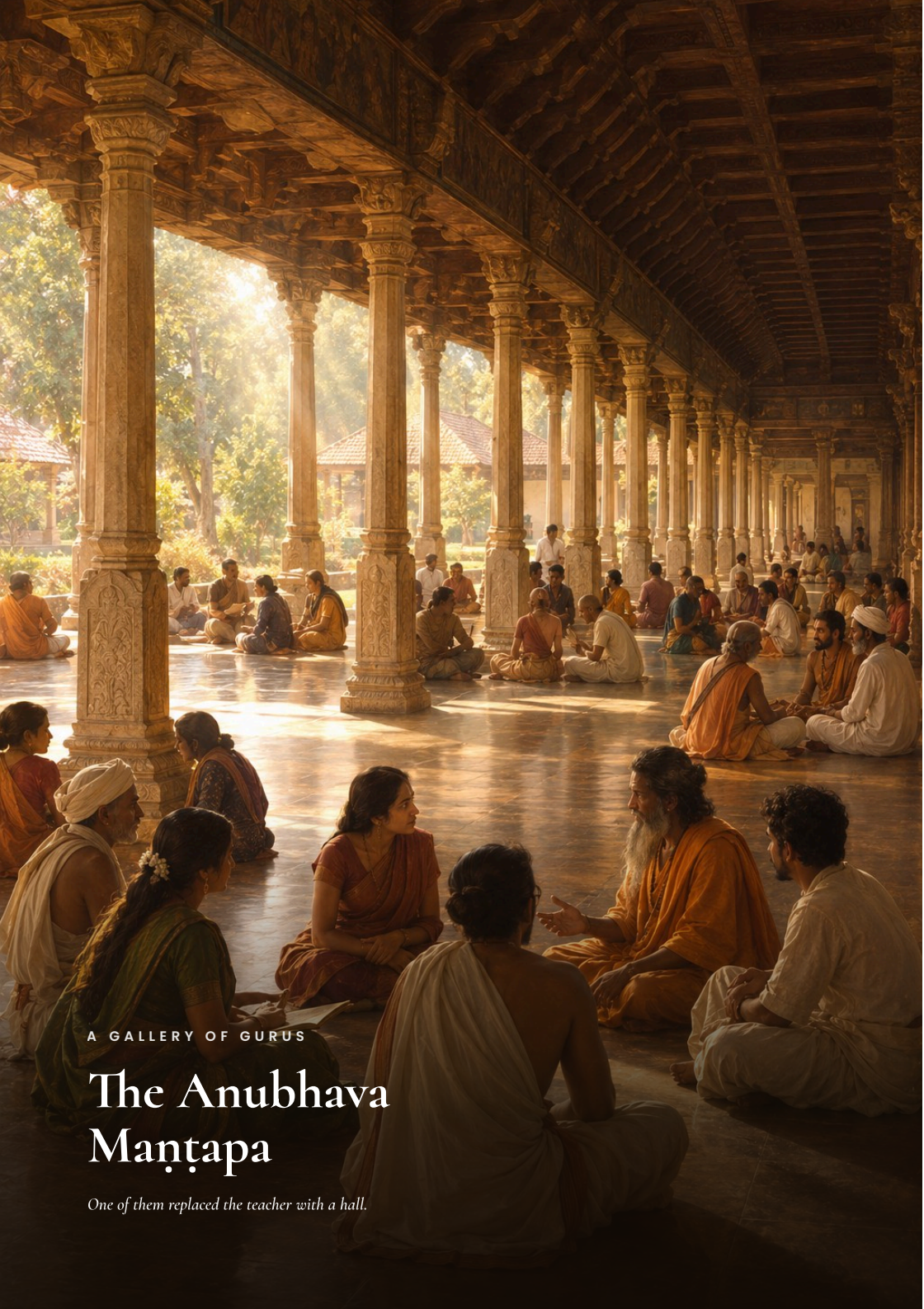
His organisational act matters as much as his philosophy. He established four pīṭhas — Śṛṅgeri, Dvārakā, Purī, Badarī — at the four quarters, and assigned each a Veda and a disciple. It is Vyāsa's instinct again: distribute, so that it survives the man.

DID YOU KNOW?

Śaṅkara's dates are traditionally 788–820 CE, though scholars dispute them. All four seats he founded are still occupied.



Śaṅkara answered the question "who are you?" with six verses saying what he was not.



A GALLERY OF GURUS

The Anubhava Maṇṭapa

One of them replaced the teacher with a hall.



Rāmānuja spent years at Melkote in Karnataka. The lineage honours him for the oath he broke.

GALLERY · VIII

Rāmānuja

The teacher who broke his oath

Rāmānuja went five times to Tirukkoṣṭiyūr before Goṣṭhīpūrṇa would give him the Aṣṭākṣara, the eight-syllabled mantra — and gave it only on an oath of absolute secrecy: to reveal it was to earn hell.

Rāmānuja walked out, climbed the temple tower, called the town together, and spoke the mantra aloud to everyone standing below.

Confronted by his furious teacher, he agreed at once that he would go to hell. He simply thought the trade worth making — his own damnation against the salvation of everyone in earshot. Goṣṭhīpūrṇa is said to have accepted the answer and called him teacher.

If one man's hell buys a whole town's release, the arithmetic is not difficult.

GALLERY · IX

Madhvācārya

Udupi · the aṣṭa maṭhas

Born at Pājaka near Udupi in the thirteenth century, Madhva argued against Śaṅkara's non-dualism for a frank realism: the difference between the soul and God, and between one soul and another, is not appearance but fact.

He was by all accounts physically formidable — a wrestler and a powerful singer — and the tradition delights in it. His Kṛṣṇa temple at Udupi remains one of the great centres of Karnataka.

His institutional design belongs beside Vyāsa's and Śaṅkara's. He founded eight maṭhas and set them in a rotation — the *paryāya* — by which each takes charge of the Kṛṣṇa temple in turn. No seat holds power permanently.

DID YOU KNOW?

From this lineage came the Haridāsas — Purandara Dāsa and Kanaka Dāsa — who put Vedānta into Kannada song.



The paryāya has rotated between eight maṭhas for seven centuries.



Basavaṇṇa moved the teaching out of Sanskrit and into Kannada.

GALLERY · X

Basavaṇṇa

And the Anubhava Maṇṭapa

In twelfth-century Karnataka, Basavaṇṇa did something no guru before him had attempted: he replaced the teacher with a hall.

The Anubhava Maṇṭapa at Kalyāṇa was an open assembly where anyone could speak — washermen, cobblers, women, the unlettered — and where what was said was recorded not in Sanskrit but in Kannada, in short unrhymed *vacanas* any speaker of the language could understand at once.

Akka Mahādevi's vacanas are among the finest poetry in Kannada. Allama Prabhu presided. It was an experiment in making a paramparā horizontal rather than vertical, and it was crushed within a generation. The vacanas survived, which was the point.

> The rich build temples for Śiva.
> What can a poor man do? My legs are the pillars, my body the shrine.
>
> BASAVAṆṆA

GALLERY · XI

Rāmānanda and Kabīr

The lineage that would not check credentials

Rāmānanda, in fifteenth-century Kāśī, took students without asking after their birth — among them Ravidās the cobbler, Sena the barber, Dhanna the farmer, and a Muslim weaver's son named Kabīr.

Refused an audience, Kabīr lay across the ghāṭ steps before dawn. Rāmānanda stumbled over him and exclaimed *Rām! Rām!* — and Kabīr took the accident as initiation and the utterance as his mantra.

Kabīr then turned on both traditions that claimed him, mocking the paṇḍit's Sanskrit and the mullah's call to prayer with equal relish.

गुरु गोविन्द दोऊ खड़े, काके लागूँ पाँय।
बलिहारी गुरु आपने, गोविन्द दियो बताय॥

Guru and God stand before me — whose feet shall I touch first? I bow to the guru, who showed me God.

KABĪR



Kabīr at the loom. He never stopped weaving.





Dakṣiṇeśvar, and the student who carried his teacher to the world.

GALLERY · XII

Rāmakṛṣṇa and Vivekānanda

The last classical pairing

Narendranath Datta came to Dakṣiṇeśvar as a sceptic trained in Western philosophy, and asked the priest the question he had put to everyone else: have you seen God?

Rāmakṛṣṇa answered that he had, as clearly as he saw the young man before him — and could show him. It is the only recorded answer that satisfied Narendranath, and he stayed.

Rāmakṛṣṇa was barely literate and had practised in turn as a Vaiṣṇava, a Tāntrika, an Advaitin, a Muslim and a Christian, concluding that each road arrived. Vivekānanda was university-educated, argumentative and organisationally gifted. Neither could have done the other's work.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1893 the student addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and a village teaching became audible to the world.

GALLERY · XIII

Kulapati K. M. Munshi

And this Bhavan

The line reaches us, and it is worth naming the link.

K. M. Munshi was a lawyer, a novelist in Gujarati, a member of the Constituent Assembly, and the founder in 1938 of this institution. The title he took was not president or chairman but ***Kulapati*** — the head of a ***kula***, the ancient word for the household of students who lived with a teacher.

The choice was deliberate. He was not building a cultural society. He was attempting to reconstitute, in the conditions of the twentieth century, what the gurukula had been: a place where an inheritance is handed over in person.

The Bhavan's classes in Sanskrit and music, its endowment lectures, its Book University and this magazine are instruments of that one intention.

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

ṚGVEDA I.89.1 · THE BHAVAN'S MOTTO



Kulapati K. M. Munshi, who chose the oldest word for teacher as his title.



END OF THE CENTREPIECE

The Line Continues

Someone who knows, sitting with someone who does not, for longer than is efficient.

Sources & further reading: *Taittirīya, Muṇḍaka, Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya Upaniṣads; the Mahābhārata; the Guru Gītā; Śaṅkara's Vivekacūḍāmaṇi.*

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana

Your right is to the action alone, never to its fruits. The verse the speaker chose to clarify — effort is ours, outcomes are not, and fixating on the result only spoils the work.

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ II.47

THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ AT A GLANCE

- Eighteen chapters and some seven hundred verses, set within the **Bhīṣma Parva** of the Mahābhārata.
- The oldest surviving commentary is **Ādi Śaṅkara's bhāṣya**; almost every later school of Vedānta wrote its own.
- The first English translation was made by **Charles Wilkins** and published in London in **1785**, with a preface by Warren Hastings — the first direct rendering of any Sanskrit work into a European language.
- Wilkins gave the eighteen chapters as "Eighteen Lectures".



ENDOWMENT

Bhagavad Gītā: Manual of Life

The Sai Grace Foundation Endowment Programme, 14 July 2026.

ENDOWMENT

Bhagavad Gītā: Manual of Life

Sai Grace Foundation Endowment Programme · Sri Yadalam Nanjaiah Setty Memorial Lecture

BRAHMACHARI DR. VED CHAITANYA · 14 JULY 2026 · KHINCHA HALL

THE PROGRAMME

The Annual Endowment Program of the Sai Grace Foundation, conducted in collaboration with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bengaluru Kendra, commenced with a traditional Veda Parayana rendered by the students of Gautama Vedapathashala. Established in the year 2000, the Sai Grace Foundation Bengaluru carries forward the charitable legacy of the Yadalam education, healthcare, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Over the decades, the foundation has established key community initiatives, including ongoing institutional support for Gautama Vedapathashala currently home to 27 resident students; a corpus endowment supporting the Lions Club of Bangalore West Trust Eye Hospital, annual merit scholarships for deserving students, and support for goshala



Brahmachari Dr. Ved Chaitanya delivering the Memorial Lecture.



The dais, with the memorial portraits garlanded and the lamp lit.

THE MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

A central highlight of the evening was the presentation of the merit scholarships, marking the 20th year of this noble educational initiative. Smt. Pallavi Yadalam announced and distributed awards to 30 top-performing students across various courses.

The Yadalam Nanjaiah Setty Merit Scholarship was conferred upon 18 boys pursuing engineering and commerce degrees, while the Yadalam Gangadhar Setty Merit Scholarship was awarded to 12 girls pursuing higher studies in medicine, engineering, education, and computer applications. Additionally, Shri Vijay Kumar Yadalam highlighted the foundation's ongoing partnership with Gautama Vedapathashala since 2019, commending its founder, Shri Govinda Sharma, for his dedicated efforts toward scriptural education.

THE ENDOWMENT LECTURE

The principal event of the evening was the endowment lecture titled "Bhagavad Gita: Manual of Life," delivered by Brahmachari Dr. Ved Chaitanya of Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth and Chinmaya International Foundation. Addressing the audience, the speaker reflected on why a 5,500-year-old text delivered on an ancient battlefield remains deeply relevant today. Drawing from the classical poet Kalidasa, he emphasized that an intelligent person neither blindly accepts everything old nor rejects everything new, but carefully analyses both. While era-specific rules and technologies undergo rapid changes evident from the shift from telegrams to instant digital communication — universal values such as truthfulness, integrity, and self-discipline remain timeless. The Bhagavad Gita contains this higher tier of universal wisdom, making its insights as applicable today as when they were first spoken.

Comparing the scripture to an instruction guide, Dr. Ved Chaitanya explained that operating any complex equipment without reading its manual inevitably leads to misuse or damage. Human life functions in much the same way: although we are endowed with a body, mind, and intellect, we often navigate life through trial and error, struggling with stress, emotional turbulence, and decision-making because we do not understand our internal equipment. The Bhagavad Gita serves as the primary user manual provided by the Creator, offering a clear framework to discipline the body, quieten the mind, and sharpen the intellect to lead a balanced and purposeful life.

Unlike other classical philosophical discourses delivered in the quietude of a forest ashram, the Gita was imparted amidst the chaos of a battlefield. Arjuna, a formidable warrior, experienced an emotional breakdown, set down his weapons, and surrendered in utter confusion. Following the eighteen chapters of guidance from Shri Krishna, he regained clarity and successfully performed his duty. Because modern individuals face daily mental conflicts, moral dilemmas, and practical decision-making hurdles in their personal and professional lives, the battlefield setting of the Gita makes its teachings directly applicable to everyday challenges.



The guests of the endowment on stage, beside the lamp and the memorial portraits.



The gathering on stage at the close of the endowment.

The speaker further elaborated on how the Bhagavad Gita encapsulates the core message of the entire Vedic tradition. The three primary divisions of the Vedas Karma Kanda (action), Upasana Kanda (devotion), and Jnana Kanda (knowledge) are systematically presented across the eighteen chapters of the Gita as Karma Yoga (Chapters 1–6), Bhakti Yoga (Chapters 7–12), and Jnana Yoga (Chapters 13–18). Clarifying a common misconception regarding verse 2.47 (*Karmanye vadhikaraste*), he explained that focusing on duty does not mean working without a vision. Rather, it highlights that while effort is within human control, external results are influenced by many factors. Fixating on outcomes while acting creates anxiety and compromises performance, whereas perfecting the process ensures that results naturally follow.

In conclusion, Brahmachari Dr. Ved Chaitanya emphasized that the Bhagavad Gita is universally accessible to all people, regardless of age, background, or profession, acting as a reflective mirror for self-improvement. He urged the audience to actively study and test its principles in daily living, recalling Pujya Swami Chinmayanandaji's memorable reminder that the true value lies not merely in how many times one has gone through the Gita, but in how much of the Gita has gone through the individual.

ENDOWMENT

The Endowment in Pictures



The hall from the stage.



Veda Parayana, with which the endowment opened.



Flowers offered on stage.



The lighting of the lamp.

ENDOWMENT

The Endowment in Pictures *continued*



The speaker with guests and hosts.



Introducing the endowment from the lectern.



Guests of the endowment at the Kendra.



Among the audience in Khincha Hall.



A full house in Khincha Hall.

यद्यपि बहु नाधीषे तथापि पठ पुत्र व्याकरणम् ।

yadyapi bahu nādhīṣe tathāpi paṭha putra vyākaraṇam

Though you may not study much else, study grammar, my son. A verse long quoted by teachers of Sanskrit — grammar first, because everything else depends on reading correctly.

TRADITIONAL

कालः पचति भूतानि कालः संहरते प्रजाः ।

kālaḥ pacati bhūtāni kālaḥ saṁharate prajāḥ

Time ripens all beings; time gathers the people back. A line from the Mahābhārata on kāla as the one agent that acts on everything, and the reason its measurement was treated as a science.

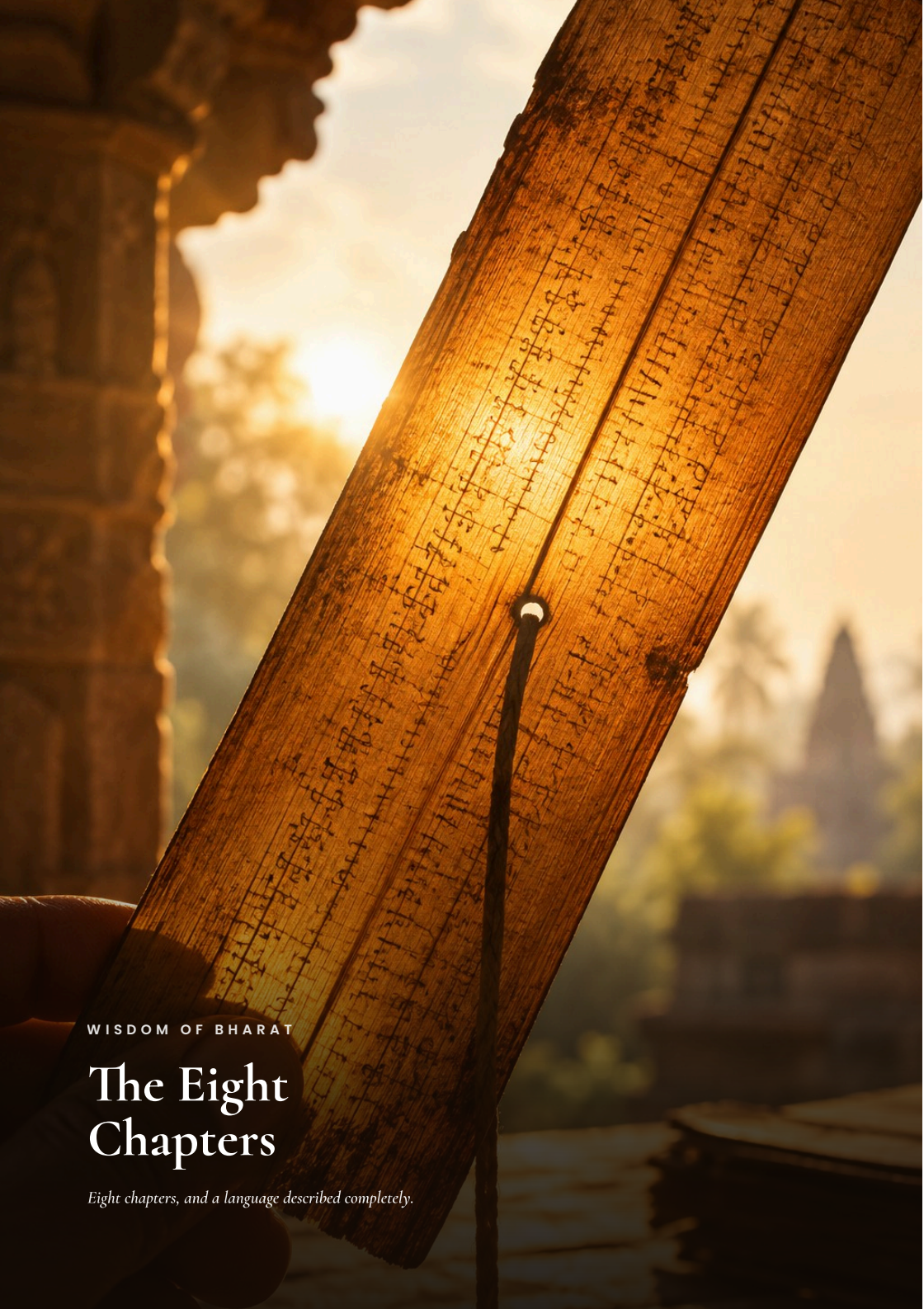
MAHĀBHĀRATA

DID YOU KNOW · GRAMMAR

- The **Aṣṭādhyāyī** is a set of rules, not a list of words.
- Its fourteen opening lines name every class of sound the grammar needs — the **Śiva Sūtras**.

DID YOU KNOW · TIME

- The Indian calendar is **luni-solar:** months by the moon, the year corrected against the sun.
- An extra month, **adhika māsa**, falls seven times in nineteen years.



WISDOM OF BHARAT

The Eight Chapters

Eight chapters, and a language described completely.

WISDOM OF BHARAT

The Eight Chapters

Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī — the grammar that anticipated the formal languages of the modern world.

CREATED AND COMPILED BY PRANAVA

Somewhere in the north-west of the subcontinent, probably in the fifth or fourth century before the common era, a man sat down to describe a language completely.

He did not write a textbook. He wrote a machine. The Aṣṭādhyāyī — "eight chapters" — is a set of just under four thousand rules which, applied in order, will generate any correctly formed word in Sanskrit and will not generate an incorrect one. Nothing of comparable ambition would be attempted anywhere in the world for another two thousand years.

Of Pāṇini himself almost nothing survives. Tradition places him at Śalātura in Gandhāra, in what is now north-western Pakistan. He is a name attached to a text, and the text is so far ahead of anything around it that scholars have spent two centuries trying to account for how it could exist at all.



Just under four thousand rules, compressed to the edge of legibility.



Tradition places Pāṇini at Śalātura in Gandhāra.

THE PROBLEM HE SET HIMSELF

Every language changes, and a language carried by memory changes faster. The Vedic corpus was already old by Pāṇini's time, and the speech of ordinary people had drifted away from it. If the tradition was to keep reciting a text it no longer spoke, someone had to write down what the correct forms actually were.

The obvious method is to list them. Sanskrit makes that impossible: a single verb root can yield many hundreds of forms, and the language has some two thousand roots. A list would run to millions of entries and still miss the word coined tomorrow.

Pāṇini's answer was to describe not the forms but the rules that make them. Give the machine a root and a set of conditions, and it returns the word. It is the difference between a dictionary and a grammar, and he is the first person known to have grasped it completely.

> He did not write a textbook. He wrote a machine.

THE FOURTEEN SOUNDS

The Aṣṭādhyāyī opens with something that looks like nonsense: fourteen short lines listing the sounds of Sanskrit, each ending in a consonant that is not pronounced. These are the Śiva Sūtras, and they are the most economical piece of engineering in the whole work.

The letters are not in alphabetical order. They are arranged so that any grammatically useful class of sounds — all vowels, all stops, all sounds that behave alike before a particular ending — falls into a single unbroken run. To name that class you give its first sound and its closing marker, and the two letters stand for the whole set.

Such a contraction is called a *pratyāhāra*. The most famous of them, written *aC*, stands for every vowel; *haL* stands for every consonant. Fourteen lines of apparent gibberish let the rest of the grammar speak about sounds in two syllables instead of forty.

THE ŚIVA SŪTRAS

Fourteen lines, forty-two sounds, and an ordering chosen so that every class the grammar needs is a single unbroken run. From them Pāṇini builds the abbreviations, or **pratyāhāras**, that the remaining rules depend on.



Fourteen lines, and every class of sound the grammar needs.



The grammar was learnt as the Veda was learnt — by heart, and aloud.

A LANGUAGE FOR TALKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

What makes the Aṣṭādhyāyī modern is not its coverage but its method. Pāṇini writes in a technical idiom that is not ordinary Sanskrit: a metalanguage, with its own conventions, its own markers, and its own rules about how the rules themselves are to be read.

Endings are attached to roots by rules whose conditions are stated in grammatical cases, so that the case ending on a term tells you what role it plays in the operation. A word in the ablative means "after this". A word in the locative means "when this follows". The syntax of the rule carries the logic of the rule.

Terms carry forward silently from one rule to the next — a device called *anuvṛtti* — so that a rule may be three words long and still inherit half its content from the rules above it. Nothing is repeated. The text is compressed to the edge of legibility, which is why it has needed commentators ever since.

WHEN RULES COLLIDE

Any system of several thousand rules will produce cases where two rules apply at once and give different answers. Pāṇini anticipated this and wrote rules about rules — *paribhāṣā* — to settle the conflicts.

The general principle is that the more specific rule wins over the more general, and that where two are equally matched, the one later in the text prevails. A modern programmer would recognise both at once: they are the conflict-resolution strategies of any rule-based system.

> The syntax of the rule carries the logic of the rule.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

In the twentieth century, when computer scientists needed a way to describe the exact form of a programming language, they arrived at a notation of rules that rewrite symbols into other symbols. It is called Backus–Naur Form, after the two men who devised it in the 1950s.

Historians of science who know the Aṣṭādhyāyī often call it the **Pāṇini–Backus Form**, because the essential idea — a finite set of ordered rewrite rules generating an infinite set of well formed expressions — is the same idea, arrived at independently, some two and a half thousand years apart.



Where two rules collide, the more specific prevails.



The Mahābhāṣya is many times the length of the text it explains.

That is the claim worth making, and it is worth making carefully. Pāṇini did not invent the computer, and nothing in his work anticipates a machine. What he did was to see that a language can be specified exactly, by rules, without listing its sentences — and to carry that insight through to the end on a language of formidable complexity.

THE COMMENTARY THAT FOLLOWED

The Aṣṭādhyāyī did not stand alone for long. Kātyāyana wrote critical notes, the *vārttikas*, testing the rules against forms Pāṇini had not covered. Patañjali then wrote the *Mahābhāṣya*, the Great Commentary, which discusses both.

The three together — sūtra, vārttika, bhāṣya — became the *trimuni*, the three sages, and no serious study of Sanskrit grammar since has been able to proceed without them. It is a paramparā of exactly the kind this issue is about: a text, a line of teachers, and an argument that has been running for two thousand years and has not finished.

A finite set of ordered rules, generating an infinite set of well formed expressions. The same idea, arrived at independently, two and a half thousand years apart.

Next month — the Sūrya Siddhānta, and how India measured the year.

Sources & further reading: *Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī and the Śiva Sūtras; Kātyāyana's vārttikas; Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya.*



KNOWLEDGE TRADITIONS OF BHARAT

Kāla-gaṇanā

Āṣāḍha — the month the calendar works to keep in the rains.



Twelve lunar months fall eleven days short of a solar year.

KNOWLEDGE TRADITIONS OF BHARAT

Kāla-gaṇanā

The reckoning of time — and why the festivals of Āṣāḍha stay in the monsoon.

CREATED AND COMPILED BY PRANAVA

Guru Pūrṇimā falls this month, and so does Ratha Yātrā. Both belong to Āṣāḍha. Neither has a fixed date in the calendar hanging on the wall, and every year someone asks why.

The answer is that India has never abandoned a calendar that has to satisfy two masters at once. The moon governs the month; the sun governs the year; and the two do not divide evenly into one another. Most civilisations, faced with this, eventually chose one and let the other drift. India chose to keep both, and built the machinery to make it work.

TWO CLOCKS THAT DO NOT AGREE

A lunar month — new moon to new moon — runs a little over 29½ days. Twelve of them make about 354 days. A solar year is a little over 365¼. The gap is roughly eleven days a year.

Left alone, that gap moves festivals steadily backwards through the seasons. A purely lunar calendar will walk a harvest festival into the monsoon within a decade and into winter within twenty years. A purely solar calendar keeps the seasons but loses the moon, and with it every observance tied to a phase — ekādaśī, pūrṇimā, amāvāsyā.

> **The moon governs the month; the sun governs the year; and the two do not divide evenly into one another.**

The Indian solution is the luni-solar calendar: months counted by the moon, the year corrected against the sun. It is the harder path, and it is the reason the pañcāṅga is a book of calculation rather than a sheet of dates.



The correction is calculated, not guessed.



Five limbs: tithi, vāra, nakṣatra, yoga, karaṇa.

THE THIRTEENTH MONTH

The correction is elegant. Instead of adding a day here and there, the calendar adds a whole month — an ***adhika māsa***, an extra month — roughly every thirty-two and a half months, or seven times in nineteen years.

The rule that decides when is precise. Each solar month is the time the sun takes to cross one sign of the zodiac, a little over thirty days, which is longer than a lunar month. Occasionally a lunar month begins and ends without the sun crossing into a new sign at all. That month is declared the extra one. It takes the name of the month that follows and the prefix ***adhika***, and the calendar simply lives through it twice.

ADHIKA MĀSA

A lunar month in which the sun does not enter a new zodiacal sign is intercalated as an extra month. It occurs about seven times in every nineteen years, which is what keeps Āṣāḍha in the monsoon and not, eventually, in the winter.

This is why a festival appears to move by ten or eleven days each year and then jumps forward by a month. It is not drifting. It is being held in place.

FIVE LIMBS

A pañcāṅga is literally a thing of five limbs, and the five are the quantities that fix any given day in the traditional reckoning.

The *tithi* is a lunar day — the time in which the moon gains twelve degrees on the sun. Because the moon does not move at a constant speed, a tithi is not a fixed length; it may run to nearly twenty-seven hours or fall short of twenty. This is why a tithi can skip a civil day, or occupy two.

The *vāra* is the weekday, the only one of the five that is exactly the length we expect. The *nakṣatra* is the lunar mansion the moon occupies, one of twenty-seven divisions of its path. The *yoga* and the *karaṇa* are further combinations of solar and lunar longitude.

Between them the five limbs describe a day completely — not by number, but by the actual positions of the two bodies overhead. A date in this system is not a label. It is an observation.

A date in this system is not a label. It is an observation.



Guru Pūrṇimā — the full moon of Āṣāḍha.



The sun governs the year.

WHERE THE MONTH BEGINS

One further complication, and it explains a genuine regional difference. In the *amānta* reckoning, followed in much of western and southern India, a month ends at the new moon. In the *pūrṇimānta* reckoning of the north, it ends at the full moon.

The result is that the same day may carry two month-names depending on where you stand. The festival is the same, the calculation is the same, and only the bookkeeping differs. Guru Pūrṇimā, falling on a full moon, is untroubled by this: it is the last day of Āṣāḍha in one system and the middle of it in the other, but it is the same moon.

COUNTING THE YEARS

India has never settled on a single era, and does not need to. The **Vikrama Saṁvat** and the **Śaka** era are the two most widely used, the Śaka being the basis of the Indian national calendar adopted in 1957. Kerala keeps the **Kollam** era; the **Kali** reckoning underlies astronomical work.

Each also names its years within a sixty-year cycle, so that a year carries a name as well as a number. It is the same instinct as the nakṣatra: a moment is better identified by its character than by its place in a queue.

THE ASTRONOMERS BEHIND IT

None of this is folklore. The rules come out of the *siddhānta* literature — the Sūrya Siddhānta, and the works of Āryabhaṭa, Varāhamihira, Brahmagupta and Bhāskara — which computed the lengths of the month and the year, the motions of the planets, and the circumstances of eclipses, and did so to an accuracy that still surprises.

Āryabhaṭa, writing in 499 CE, gave a length for the sidereal year that differs from the modern value by a few minutes. He also held that the apparent daily rotation of the heavens is caused by the earth turning on its own axis — a position that most of his successors declined to follow.

The pañcāṅga in a Bengaluru household this month is the working end of that tradition. Someone computed the tithi. The rule that governs it was written down fifteen centuries ago, and it is still being applied.

The rule was written down fifteen centuries ago, and it is still being applied.

So Ratha Yātrā and Guru Pūrṇimā fall in Āṣāḍha because Āṣāḍha is where the monsoon is — and the calendar has been quietly working, month by month and intercalation by intercalation, to keep it there.

Sources & further reading: *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa; the Sūrya Siddhānta; Āryabhaṭīya; standard pañcāṅga tables.*



Āryabhaṭa's year is a few minutes from the modern value.

व्यासाय विष्णुरूपाय व्यासरूपाय विष्णवे ।
नमो वै ब्रह्मनिधये वासिष्ठाय नमो नमः ॥

vyāsāya viṣṇu-rūpāya vyāsa-rūpāya viṣṇave
namo vai brahma-nidhaye vāsiṣṭhāya namo namaḥ

Salutations to Vyāsa, who is Viṣṇu's form, and to Viṣṇu, who takes Vyāsa's form; salutations again and again to that treasury of Brahman, of the line of Vasiṣṭha. The verse with which Vyāsa Pūjā opens.

VYĀSA VANDANA

ĀṢĀḌHA'S FULL MOON

- **Guru Pūrṇimā** and **Āsāḷha Pūjā** fall on the same day in 2026 — Wednesday 29 July.
- The teacher's seat is the **vyāsa-pīṭha**; the worship offered on the day is Vyāsa Pūjā.
- The monastic **cāturmāsya** — four months of staying put — begins at this full moon.



FESTIVALS

Guru Pūrṇimā

The full moon of Āṣāḍha — Wednesday 29 July 2026.



Āṣāḍha's full moon — the wettest full moon of the Indian year.

FESTIVALS

Guru Pūrṇimā

The full moon of Āṣāḍha — Wednesday 29 July 2026 — and why the tradition gave the wettest full moon of the year to teachers.

CREATED AND COMPILED BY PRAKRITI

On the evening of Wednesday the twenty-ninth of July, the moon of Āṣāḍha comes to the full. It is the wettest, greyest full moon of the Indian year, and it is the one the tradition chose to give to teachers.

That choice was not sentimental. The rains had stopped the roads. Wandering teachers could not wander, students could not disperse, and for four months everybody stayed where they were. Guru Pūrṇimā stands at the door of that enforced stillness — the day the year turns from travelling to sitting still and learning.

VYĀSA PŪRṆIMĀ

The day's older name is Vyāsa Pūrṇimā. Tradition holds that Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa was born on this full moon — the compiler who divided the undivided Veda into four, gave the Mahābhārata its shape, and is counted the first teacher of the line.

This is why the seat a teacher occupies is called the *vyāsa-pīṭha*, and why the formal worship offered today is Vyāsa Pūjā. The honour is not paid to a person but to a position. Whoever sits in that seat is, for the moment, standing in for Vyāsa.

The work attributed to him is the founding act of the whole transmission. He is said to have taken a single mass of received hymnody and sorted it into the Ṛg, Yajus, Sāman and Atharvan — and then to have given one collection to each of four disciples, so that no single memory carried the whole and no single failure could lose it. The division of the Veda is also its insurance policy.

GURU PŪRṆIMĀ 2026

Wednesday **29 July 2026**. The Pūrṇimā tithi opens on the evening of 28 July and closes on the evening of the 29th; observances follow the daytime of the 29th. It is the full moon of **Āṣāḍha**, the fourth month of the Indian calendar.



The vyāsa-pīṭha. The honour is paid to the seat, not the occupant.



The deer park at Sarnath, where the teaching first passed to another.

ONE FULL MOON, THREE TRADITIONS

The same full moon carries a second name. In the Theravāda world it is Āsāḷha Pūjā, or Dhamma Day, kept as the anniversary of the Buddha's first discourse — the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Dhamma, given at the deer park at Sarnath to the five who had been his companions in austerity.

It is the moment the teaching first passed from one person to another, and the moment the Saṅgha began. In 2026 Āsāḷha Pūjā and Guru Pūrṇimā are the same Wednesday.

Jain tradition marks the day too. It is remembered as the day Mahāvīra accepted Indrabhūti Gautama as his first disciple — again, not a birth or a death, but the beginning of a line of transmission.

> Three traditions, one full moon, and in every case the same event: the day the knowledge first moved.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY DONE

The observance is unusually plain. There is no procession and nothing is burnt or immersed. A student goes to the teacher, offers flowers, sandal paste and unbroken rice, and touches the feet.

Where the teacher is no longer living, or is a lineage rather than a person, the offering is made to the seat, to a portrait, or to a book. Maṭhas and pāṭhaśālās perform Vyāsa Pūjā and recite the Guru Gītā. Musicians and dancers offer a first performance of the season to their guru before offering it to anyone else.

The text most often read aloud is the Guru Gītā, and the verse most often quoted from it makes an argument rather than a compliment: that the teacher is called Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva not because the teacher is divine, but because teaching does what those three do — it brings something into being, holds it steady, and removes what obstructs it.

Then comes *guru-dakṣiṇā* — the return gift. It is the oldest and least comfortable part of the day, because the tradition is explicit that teaching cannot be bought and equally explicit that it must not be taken for nothing. What is given is left to the student to judge, which is the whole point.



Flowers, sandal paste and unbroken rice — the whole of the ritual.



Cāturmāsya: four months in which the teacher cannot travel, and so teaches.

THE FOUR MONTHS

From this full moon the *cāturmāsya* begins: four months in which monastics stay put. The rule is practical in origin — the monsoon roads are impassable and the fields are full of new life that a walking order would trample — but its effect is educational.

A teacher who cannot travel teaches. The four months of the rains are, historically, when the long texts were gone through, when commentaries were dictated, and when a student got sustained access to a mind that would be on the road again by Kārttika.

The season is right for it in a second sense. By the full moon of Āṣāḍha the sun has already turned south, and the half of the year that follows is the one the tradition associates with turning inward rather than outward — with study, observance and restraint rather than enterprise. The festival sits exactly on that hinge.

> The rains stopped the roads. Guru Pūrṇimā stands at the door of that stillness.

WHY IT STILL HOLDS

A festival for teachers could easily have become a festival for institutions. It has not, and the reason is in the grammar of the day: the honour goes to the seat, not the occupant, and to the line, not the individual.

That is also the reason it survives in places that have no maṭha and no lineage — in schools, in music rooms, in laboratories. Anyone who has been taught anything has somewhere in their past a person who took the trouble. Āṣāḍha's full moon is the day set aside to say so.

At the Bhavan the day sits naturally in the calendar. The Kendra's whole work is the passing on of something received, and this is the one day of the year when that is the explicit subject rather than the quiet assumption.

There is one more thing worth noticing about the date. Guru Pūrṇimā is not the anniversary of a victory, a birth, or a death. It marks a transfer — the moment something known by one person became known by another. Of all the things a culture might choose to put a full moon against, that is a modest and a rather demanding choice.

> Anyone who has been taught anything has somewhere in their past a person who took the trouble.

Sources & further reading: *The Guru Gītā; Encyclopædia Britannica; pañcāṅga tables for Āṣāḍha 2026.*



The first performance of the season is offered to the teacher before it is offered to anyone else.

जगन्नाथः स्वामी नयनपथगामी भवतु मे ॥

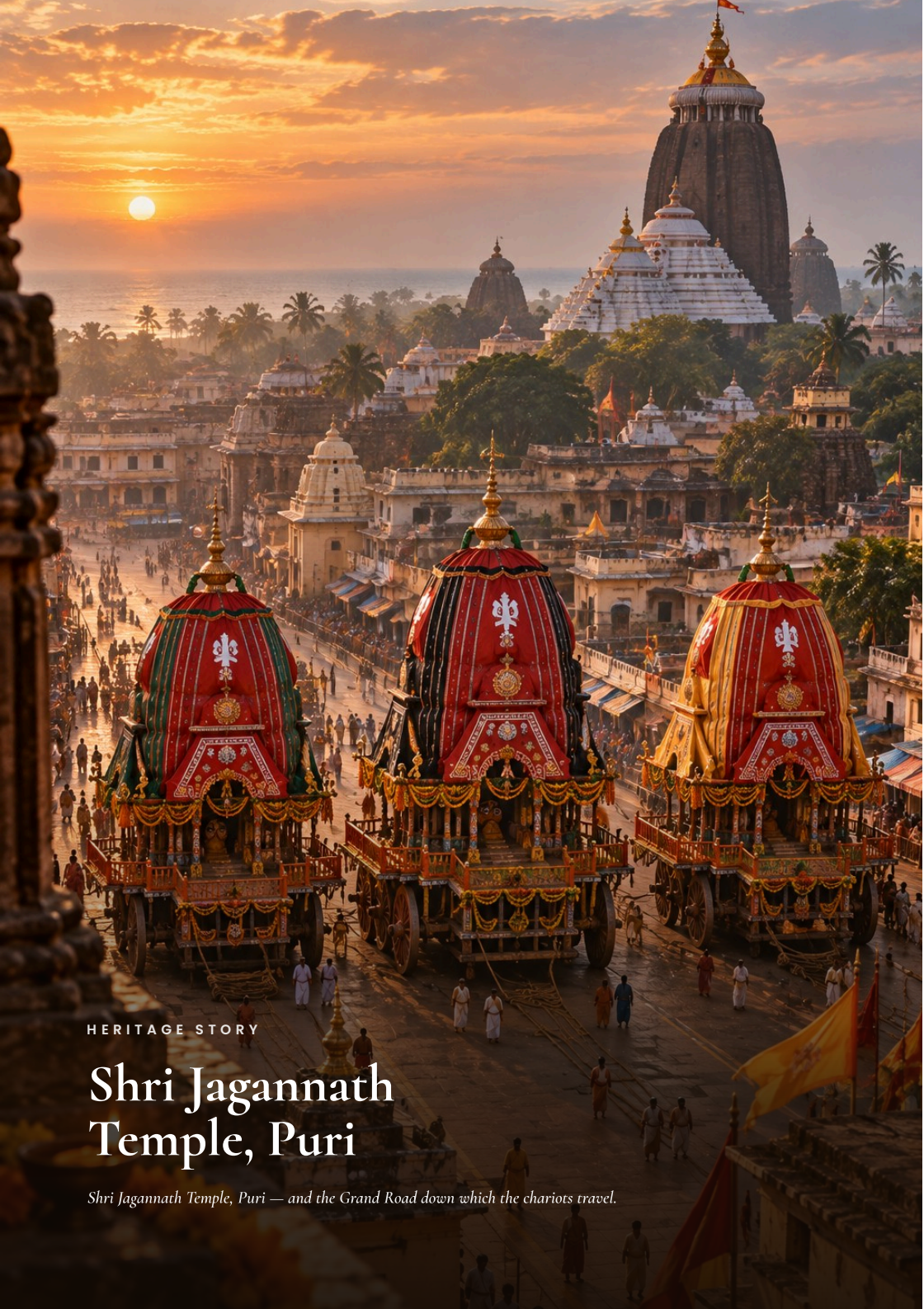
jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me

May Lord Jagannātha come within the path of my eyes. The refrain that closes each verse of the Jagannātha Aṣṭakam — a request not to be granted anything, only to be allowed to look.

JAGANNĀTHA AṢṬAKAM

ĀṢĀḌHA AT PURI, 2026

- **Rath Yatra** fell on Thursday **16 July 2026**, on Āṣāḍha śukla dvitīyā; the chariots returned on **Bahuda Jātrā**, 24 July.
- The chariots travel the **Bada Danda**, the Grand Road, from the main temple to the Gundicha Temple.
- **Guru Pūrṇimā** closes the same month, on 29 July — both festivals belong to Āṣāḍha.



HERITAGE STORY

Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri

Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri — and the Grand Road down which the chariots travel.



The temple complex at Puri, with the Bay of Bengal beyond.

HERITAGE STORY

Shri Jagannath Temple, Puri

Odisha · a Rath Yatra special

COMPILED BY MANOJ INAMDAR

Shri Jagannath Temple is located in the sacred coastal city of Puri in Odisha. Situated on the famous Grand Road (Bada Danda), the temple is one of the Char Dham pilgrimage sites established by *Adi Shankaracharya* and is also counted among the Sapta Puris, the seven holiest cities of Hinduism.

Overlooking the Bay of Bengal, it has been one of the most revered centres of Vaishnavism for centuries. Every year, millions of devotees from India and abroad visit this sacred shrine to seek the blessings of Lord Jagannath, especially during the world-famous Rath Yatra.

TEMPLE AGE

The present temple was built during the 12th century CE by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga dynasty and was later completed by his successor, King Anangabhima Deva III. Although the existing temple is about 900 years old, the worship of Lord Jagannath at Purushottama Kshetra is believed to be much older. Ancient scriptures such as the Skanda Purana, Brahma Purana and Padma Purana mention this sacred kshetra, making it one of the oldest continuously worshipped pilgrimage centres in India.

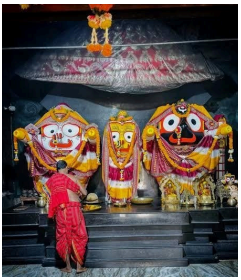
DEITY DETAILS

The presiding deity is Lord Jagannath, worshipped as the Lord of the Universe and revered as a form of Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna. Alongside him are his elder brother Lord Balabhadra, his sister Devi Subhadra and the sacred Sudarshana Chakra. One of the most unique features of this temple is that the deities are carved from sacred neem wood, known as Daru Brahma, instead of stone or metal. The idols are ceremonially replaced during the sacred Nabakalebara festival, generally once every 12 to 19 years, when the mysterious divine essence known as Brahma Padartha is transferred from the old idols to the newly carved ones through highly secret rituals performed only by selected temple priests.

The temple follows elaborate daily rituals from early morning until late at night. Every offering made to the Lord is distributed as Mahaprasad, which is regarded as one of the holiest sacred foods in Hinduism. The Mahaprasad is prepared in the temple kitchen using age-old traditional methods and is shared by devotees without any distinction of caste or social status.



The tower and its Neelachakra.



The deities, in their chosen form.



Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath, attended by the temple servitors.

ARCHITECTURE

The temple is one of the finest examples of Kalinga style architecture. The majestic main tower rises to nearly 65 metres and is crowned by the sacred Neelachakra, an eight-spoked wheel made of Ashtadhatu (an alloy of eight metals). The temple complex is enclosed by massive stone walls and has four grand entrance gates, with the Singha Dwara (Lion Gate) serving as the main entrance. It is also home to the world's largest functioning temple kitchen, where Mahaprasad is prepared every day in traditional earthen pots over wood-fired stoves.

HISTORY

Jagannath Temple has remained the spiritual heart of Odisha for over nine centuries. The Eastern Ganga and Gajapati kings considered themselves servants of Lord Jagannath and dedicated themselves to preserving the temple and its traditions. Over the centuries, the temple faced several invasions. During such times, the temple priests safely shifted the deities to secret locations to protect them and later ceremonially reinstalled them. Despite these challenges, the ancient rituals and traditions have continued uninterrupted, making Jagannath Temple one of the greatest living centres of Sanatana Dharma.

STHALAPURANA

According to the Skanda Purana, King Indradyumna of Malwa was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. His greatest desire was to have the divine darshan of the Lord in his most sacred form. One night, Lord Vishnu appeared in the King's dream and instructed him to travel to Nilachala, the sacred hill at present-day Puri, where he wished to be worshipped as Lord Jagannath. Filled with devotion, the King immediately set out on his journey. On reaching Nilachala, he searched everywhere for the mysterious deity known as Neela Madhava, who was secretly worshipped by the tribal chief Visvavasu. However, before the King could have darshan, Neela Madhava disappeared, leaving the King heartbroken.

King Indradyumna then performed intense penance and prayed continuously for the Lord's guidance. Pleased with his unwavering devotion, the Lord instructed him that a sacred neem log carrying his divine presence would soon appear on the seashore. As foretold, a magnificent neem log floated ashore from the Bay of Bengal. It emitted a divine fragrance and extraordinary radiance. This sacred log was known as Daru Brahma, the divine wood chosen by the Lord himself. The King invited many skilled sculptors to carve the idols, but none of them could shape the sacred wood.



Rath Yatra: the chariots on the Grand Road, and the crowds that draw them.



The three chariots drawn up before the temple.

At that moment, an elderly carpenter appeared before the King and offered to carve the deities. The King soon realised that the mysterious carpenter was none other than Lord Vishwakarma, the divine architect of the gods. Lord Vishwakarma agreed to undertake the work on one strict condition. He asked to be locked inside a room and instructed the King that no one should open the door until he completed carving the idols. If the door was opened before the appointed time, he would immediately stop his work and leave forever.

The King accepted the condition. Days passed in complete silence. No sound came from inside the room. Queen Gundicha became anxious and feared that something had happened to the elderly carpenter. Despite the King's hesitation, she persuaded him to open the door. The moment the door was opened, the carpenter had disappeared. [illegible]

idols of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra with unfinished hands and feet. King Indradyumna was deeply saddened and regretted breaking his promise.

Suddenly, a divine voice filled the room. Lord Jagannath declared that this incomplete form was his own chosen appearance and that he wished to remain in this unique form forever. The Lord explained that his form symbolises that he belongs equally to every devotee, irrespective of caste, wealth, status, language or physical appearance. His divine message was that true devotion is far more important than outward perfection. The King immediately installed the sacred deities according to the Lord's command. Since that day, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra have been worshipped in the same distinctive form, making this temple unlike any other in the world.

Another sacred tradition states that after Lord Krishna completed his earthly incarnation, his eternal divine essence remained untouched. This mysterious spiritual element, known as Brahma Padartha, was placed within the idol of Lord Jagannath. During every Nabakalebara ceremony, this sacred essence is secretly transferred from the old idols to the newly carved idols in complete darkness by selected temple priests. The exact nature of this sacred ritual remains one of the greatest mysteries of the Jagannath tradition.

FESTIVALS

Rath Yatra is the grandest and most celebrated festival of Jagannath Temple. Every year, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra travel in three magnificent wooden chariots from the main temple to the Gundicha Temple. Millions of devotees from across the world gather to pull the sacred chariots, believing that this act brings immense spiritual merit and divine blessings. Other important festivals celebrated at the temple include Snana Purnima, Chandan Yatra, Niladri Bije, Dol Yatra, Makar Sankranti and the rare Nabakalebara festival, during which the sacred wooden idols are ceremonially replaced according to centuries-old traditions.

IMPORTANT FACTS

- Jagannath Temple is one of the Char Dham pilgrimage sites of Hinduism.
- It is also one of the Sapta Puris, the seven holiest cities in Hinduism.
- The deities are carved from sacred neem wood instead of stone.
- The idols are replaced during the rare Nabakalebara ceremony while preserving the sacred Brahma Padartha.
- The temple kitchen is the world's largest functioning temple kitchen.
- Mahaprasad is considered one of the holiest sacred offerings in *Sanatana Dharma* and is served to thousands of devotees every day.
- The sacred Neelachakra atop the temple is made of Ashtadhatu and is revered by devotees.
- The temple flag is changed every day by temple servitors without the use of modern equipment.
- Rath Yatra is one of the oldest and largest religious festivals celebrated anywhere in the world.
- The temple stands as one of the greatest symbols of devotion, equality, faith and the timeless traditions of Sanatana Dharma.

यथा शिखा मयूराणां नागानां मणयो यथा ।
तद्वद् वेदाङ्गशास्त्राणां ज्योतिषं मूर्धनि स्थितम् ॥

yathā śikhā mayūrāṇāṃ nāgānāṃ maṇayo yathā
tadvad vedāṅga-śāstrāṇāṃ jyotiṣaṃ mūrdhani sthitam

As the crest sits on the peacock's head and the jewel on the serpent's hood, so does jyotiṣa stand at the head of the Vedāṅga śāstras. The verse the author quotes to show what his forebears thought the subject was worth.

VEDĀṄGA JYOTIṢA

THE VEDĀṄGA JYOTIṢA

- It survives in **two recensions** — one attached to the Ṛgveda, at thirty-six verses, and one to the Yajurveda, at forty-four.
- Its subject is **astronomy**, not prediction: the fixing of exact times for ritual.
- The full list of **twenty-seven nakṣatras** is absent from the Ṛgveda and the Yajurveda, and appears in the Atharvaveda and the Taittirīya Saṁhitā — there with Abhijit added, making twenty-eight.



THE PAÑCĀṄGA PAPERS

How Old Is the Indian Calendar?

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The evidence is inside the Veda itself.

THE PAÑCĀṄGA PAPERS · PART ONE

How Old Is the Indian Calendar?

From 'Bhāratīya Pañcāṅga Gaṇita' by N. S. Sridhara Murthy · rendered from the Kannada

How old is the Indian pañcāṅga? The question has been argued over for a long time, and the argument is not settled. What is not in dispute is where the evidence has to be looked for: not in later almanacs, but inside the Veda itself.

The Ṛgveda and the Yajurveda both carry mantras that identify planets. Jupiter — Bṛhaspati — and Venus are named. The Ṛgvedic verse on Bṛhaspati speaks of him as born first, in the great light of the highest heaven, seven-mouthed and many-formed, driving out the darkness with seven rays.

A DATED SKY

A Yajurvedic mantra opens on the same words and then goes further. The Taittirīya Saṁhitā records that when Bṛhaspati first rose, he appeared in the constellation facing Tiṣya — the asterism we now call Puṣya.

That is not a devotional statement. It is an observation, and an observation can be dated. Scholars, the author reports, have placed that sky near 4600 BCE. The figure is an inference, not a record — but the method behind it, reading a text back against the sky it describes, is the one on which the whole question turns.

It is not a devotional statement. It is an observation, and an observation can be dated.

THE ASTERISMS, AND WHEN THEY APPEAR

The list of twenty-seven nakṣatras familiar to every reader of a modern pañcāṅga is not, in fact, in the Ṛgveda, nor in the Yajurveda. What those two carry are scattered individual names — Tiṣya, which is Puṣya; Citrā; Revatī; Aghā, which is Maghā; and Arjunī, which is Phalgunī.



Bṛhaspati, rising in the constellation facing Tiṣya.



Twenty-seven asterisms, and then a twenty-eighth.

The complete list of twenty-seven appears later, in the Atharvaveda and in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā. And there it appears with an extra one: Abhijit, slipped in between Uttarāṣāḍhā and Śravaṇa, making twenty-eight. The system, in other words, can be watched assembling itself.

THE SIX VEDĀṄGAS

Śikṣā (phonetics), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Chandas (metre), Nirukta (etymology), **Jyotiṣa** (astronomy) and Kalpa (ritual procedure). It is the fifth of these that grew into pañcāṅga gaṇita.

ASTRONOMY, NOT FORTUNE-TELLING

The author is emphatic on a point that is worth repeating. In this context *jyotiṣa* means khagola-śāstra — astronomy. It does not mean phalajyotiṣa, the prediction of fortunes. The Indian tradition, he writes, never gave prediction primacy.

The purpose of the reckoning was practical and religious at once: to fix the exact time for yajñas and the observances that went with them. A rite performed at the wrong moment was not a rite. That requirement — precision, on a fixed day, year after year — is what drove the mathematics.

> Here jyotiṣa means astronomy. The tradition never gave prediction primacy.

TWO RECENSIONS

The Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa survives in two recensions, one attached to the Ṛgveda and one to the Yajurveda. The astronomy they discuss is the same. What differs is length: the Ṛgvedāṅga Jyotiṣa runs to thirty-six verses, the Yajurvedāṅga Jyotiṣa to forty-four.

The additional eight are explanatory, and may well have been added over time. A text that grows by commentary is a text still in use.

THE INDRAPRASTHA SCHOOL

Here the author turns to a genuine controversy. There is said to have been a school of pañcāṅga mathematics called the Indraprastha mata, current between the second century BCE and the second century CE, and described by some as a golden age of Indian mathematics. Others hold that no such school existed at all, and that it is an invention got up to glorify the tradition.

What is claimed for it is unusual. Its aim was to bring astronomy, music and the study of language onto a single footing and derive a common mathematics from them. Its first mention is traced to Samanta Chandrasekhara Simha's *Siddhānta Darpaṇa*; palm-leaf copies later surfaced in Malayalam script, which is why it was long taken for a Kerala tradition.



A rite performed at the wrong moment was not a rite.



Thirty-six verses in one recension, forty-four in the other.

The works attributed to it are mathematical throughout — square and cube roots, areas of figures, rules for the circle, series, quadratic and indeterminate equations, the rule of three. From it, it is said, comes the ***kaṭapayādi*** notation, still used in the South to order the melakarta rāgas.

WHERE THE EVIDENCE STOPS

And then the author does something a reader should be grateful for: he declines to claim more than he can show. History, he writes, needs firm evidence, and firm evidence that the Indraprastha school existed is exactly what is missing.

That an indigenous system of fundamental mathematics existed, and that it stood in some relation to pañcāṅga gaṇita, he takes to be true. What its shape was, what it achieved and why it disappeared are all still open. More research, he says, is needed.

> History needs firm evidence — and that is exactly what is missing.

Next month: the reckoning itself — the tithi, the nakṣatra and the yoga, and how a day is actually computed.

❖

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।

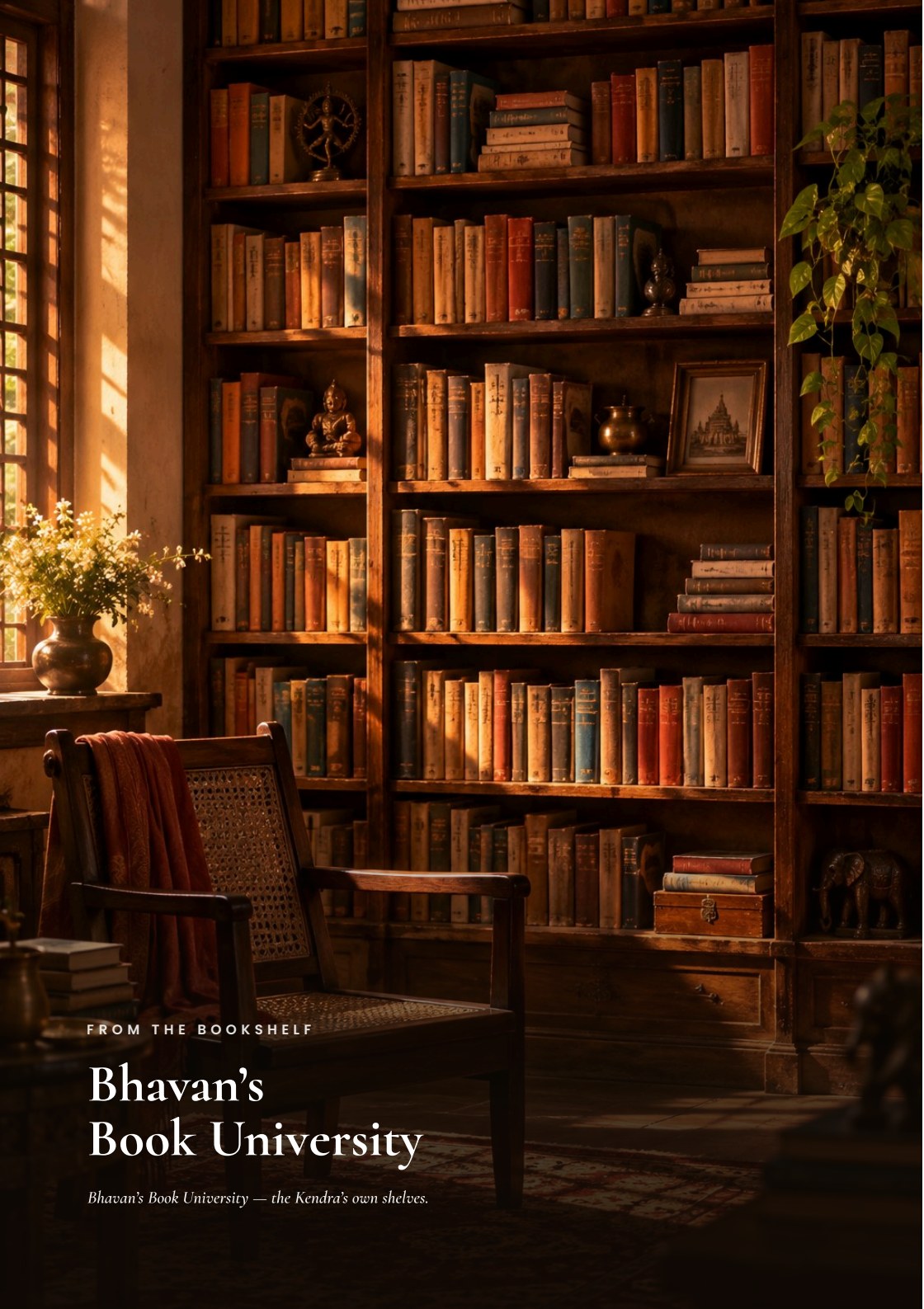
na hi jñānena sadṛśaṁ pavitram iha vidyate

“There is nothing in this world so purifying as knowledge.”

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ · 4.38

THIS MONTH

No review this month. Six titles from Bhavan’s Book University for your shelf — a civilisation read whole, the Rāmāyaṇa in Rajaji’s telling, subhāṣitas, and three slim books on duty, the Devī’s thousand names and the Gāyatrī.



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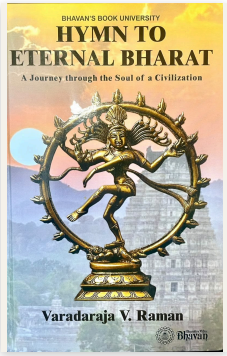
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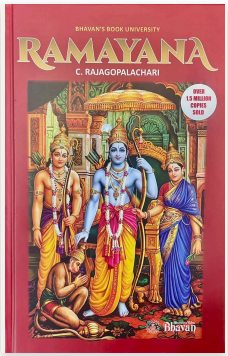
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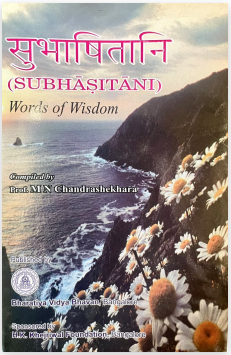
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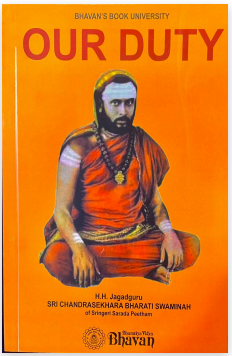
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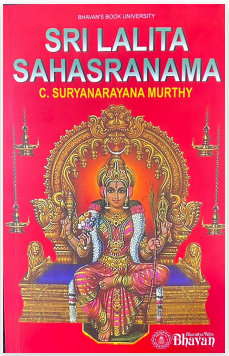


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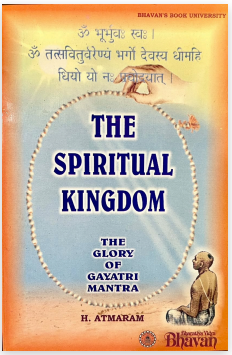


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WHAT'S UP AT THE BHAVAN

Bhavan's in Focus

Programmes for August 2026 · Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bengaluru

01
SATURDAY

10.30 a.m. · KRG Hall

'Vyāsajyothy' Award

Presented to Vidwan Dr H. V. Nagaraja Rao, Sanskrit scholar. Guest of Honour: Shri P. A. Murali, Administrator, Sringeri Mutt. Chief Guest: Shri M. Narasimhan, Trustee, Jyothy Group. Special lecture on *Guruvina Mahatva* by Vidwan Jagadisha Sharma Sampa.

01
SATURDAY

11.00 a.m. · BVB–BBMP Public School

Interactive Smart Board

Inaugurated by Shri Ajith Kumar Rai, Chairman, Suprajith Foundation. Presided by Shri K. G. Raghavan, Chairman, BVB & BBMP Public School. Chief Guest: Rtn Vipin Labroo, IPP, Rotary Bangalore Indiranagar.

15
SATURDAY

9.00 a.m. · Bhavan's premises

79th Independence Day

Celebration of the 79th year of Indian Independence. Flag hoisting at the Bhavan's premises.

29
SATURDAY

5.15 p.m. · KRG Hall

Kathākeerthan Vaibhava 2026

Nadoja Santa Bhadragiri Achyutadas and Keerthanacharya Lakshmandas Velankar Memorial. Harikathā by Vid. Sri Ramananda Bhat Sakhalkar. Divine Presence: Pujya Swami Jitakamanandaji Maharaj, Adhyakṣa, Ramakrishna Muth, Mangalore. Guest of Honour: Sangeetha Kala Ratna Dr M. Surya Prasad, renowned music and dance critic. Book release: *Srimath Bhagavata — Pravachana*, written by Keerthanacharya Shri Lakshmandas Velankar. Nadoja Santa Bhadragiri Achyutadas Memorial "Keertan Seva Ratna Award" to Pt. Dr Vinayaka Torvi, internationally renowned Hindustani vocalist; Shri H. N. Suresh, artist and art promoter; and Vid. Smt Narayani Damodar, renowned keertankar, Mangalore.

ALL WELCOME

Entry Free

For details, contact the Bhavan's office on **080–22267421 / 22267303** or mobile **9845625899**.

FROM KALĀ BHĀRATI

Kuchipudi Comes to Bhavan Kalabharati

Learn the classical grace of Kuchipudi with Guru Prateeksha Kashi — classes begin 1 August 2026.

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Rooted in the rich cultural heritage of Andhra Pradesh, Kuchipudi is one of India's most vibrant classical dance traditions — celebrated for its graceful movements, expressive storytelling, rhythmic precision, and dynamic blend of dance, music, and drama.



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The classes will be conducted by acclaimed Kuchipudi exponent Prateeksha Kashi, an internationally recognised performer, teacher, and choreographer. Trained from an early age under her mother and guru, the renowned Guru Vyjayanthi Kashi, she represents a distinguished artistic lineage dedicated to preserving and promoting the Kuchipudi tradition.

An empanelled artist of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and an A-grade artiste of Doordarshan, Prateeksha has performed at prestigious festivals across India and abroad. Her honours include the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar, the Aditya Birla Kalakiran Puraskar, and the Medha Jalota Puraskar.

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