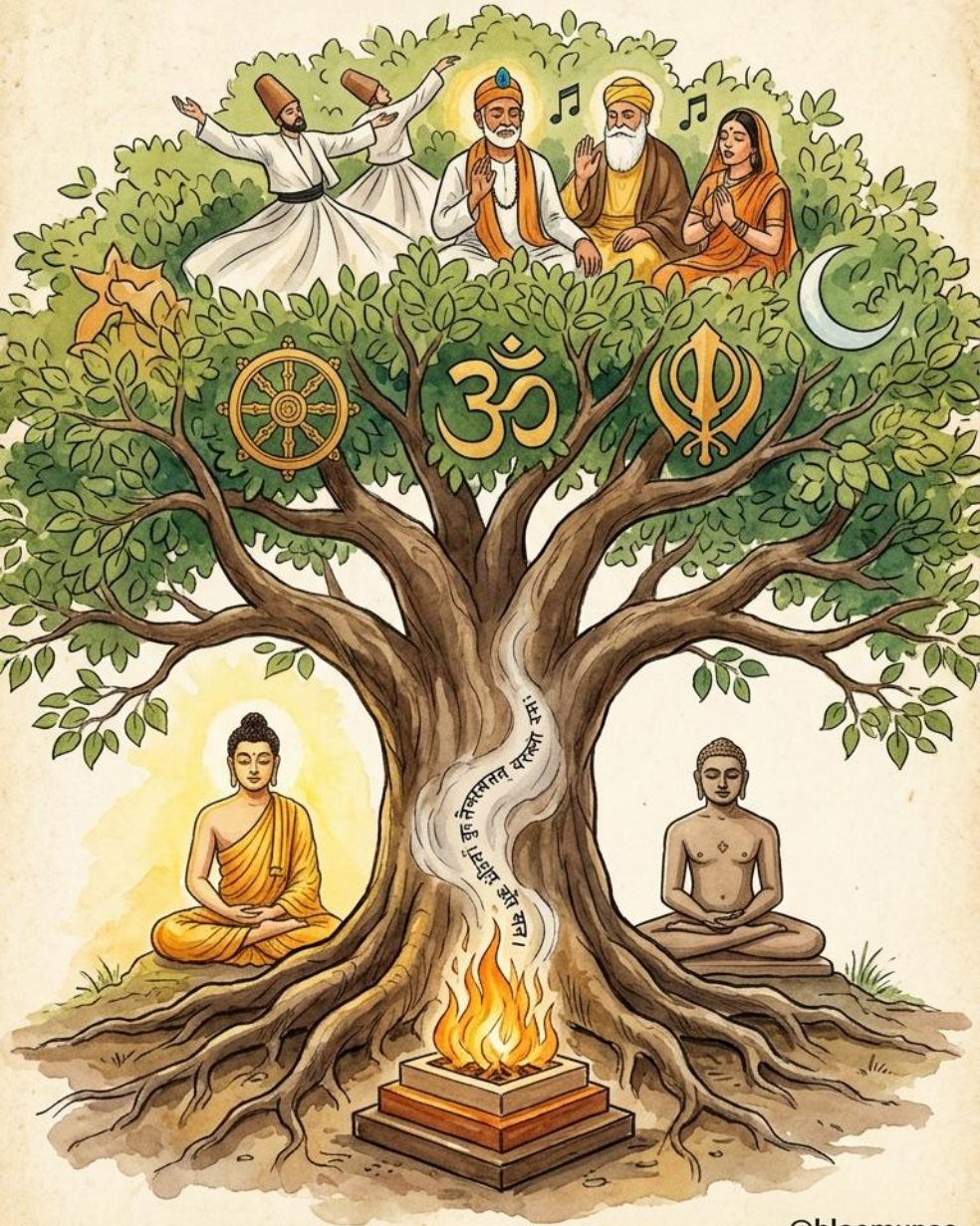


The Deepest Questions, The Boldest Answers

From the Vedic Fire to the Bhakti Revolution

Chapter 1.5 | 13 PYQs (2013-2023) | India's Philosophical DNA



Officer, this is the **DEEPEST** and most **TESTED** topic in all of Art & Culture — **13 PYQs**, second only to Architecture. Every question about Buddhism, Jainism, Vedantic philosophy, Bhakti, or Sufism leads here. Master this, and you've locked down nearly a quarter of Art & Culture marks.

KNOWLEDGE MAP: WHAT YOU SHOULD ALREADY KNOW

FROM ANCIENT INDIA (History)

- **Vedic Age:** Rig Veda, fire sacrifices, Brahminical monopoly 
- **6th c BCE:** Buddha + Mahavira challenged the old order 
- **Mauryas:** Ashoka's Dhamma (**NOT** same as Buddhism)
- **Guptas:** Hindu revival, temple building begins 

FROM LITERATURE (AC 1.4)

- **Vedic texts:** Shruti + Smriti hierarchy 
- **Pali (Buddhist) vs Prakrit (Jain)** — linguistic revolt
- **Upanishads:** Brahman, Atman, Karma, Moksha
- **Bhakti literature in regional languages**  उमलयानी कियोज्ञा आगवववा शंसवत्ता प्रकम मुंक सममा जजीतं शुधुभा (सुमगस)

ALL THREE streams converge in this chapter. Religion & Philosophy is **WHERE** history, literature, and architecture **MEET**.

FROM ARCHITECTURE (AC 1.1)

- **Buddhist:** Stupas (Sanchi), Caves (Ajanta), Viharas 
- **Hindu:** Temple evolution (Nagara, Dravidian, Vesara) 
- **Jain:** Dilwara temples, Shraavanabelagola 
- **Islamic:** Mosques, Dargahs, Sufi shrines 

WHY DID INDIA PRODUCE MORE PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS THAN ANY OTHER CIVILIZATION?

Officer, Greece had one major philosophical tradition. China had two (Confucianism, Taoism). India produced **SIX** orthodox schools, **THREE** heterodox movements, Sufism, Bhakti, and Sikhism — all asking the same questions in radically different ways. **WHY?**



RITUALISM BECAME OPPRESSIVE (1000-600 BCE)

- Brahmin monopoly on rituals → high cost of sacrifices
- Common people couldn't access spiritual knowledge
- **PRESSURE** for alternatives → **Buddha + Mahavira** said: You don't need priests.



URBANIZATION CREATED NEW THINKING CLASSES (600 BCE)

- Merchants, artisans, traders — **NEW** middle class
- They had wealth but **NO** ritual status in Varna system
- **Buddhism** and **Jainism** offered them dignity **WITHOUT** Brahminical gatekeeping



INDIA'S TRADITION OF DEBATE (shastartha)

- Unlike other civilizations that killed heretics, India **DEBATED** them
- Adi Shankaracharya defeated Buddhists through **ARGUMENT**, not force
- This culture of intellectual combat produced **MORE** philosophies, not fewer



INVASION CREATED SYNTHESIS, NOT JUST DESTRUCTION

- When Islam arrived, it didn't just replace — it **FUSED**
- Sufism + Bhakti = India's answer to religious conflict
- Sikhism emerged from this very synthesis

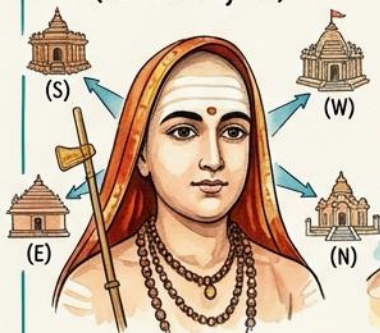
Result: India is the world's largest **LABORATORY** of philosophical experimentation. UPSC tests whether you understand the **EXPERIMENTS** and their results.

VEDANTA'S THREE GIANTS — THE DEBATE THAT DEFINED HINDUISM

Officer, if you remember **ONE** thing from this chapter, let it be this: Vedanta is **NOT** one philosophy. It's **THREE** competing interpretations of the **SAME** texts (Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, Bhagavad Gita). These three thinkers shaped every Hindu philosophical debate for 1000 years.

ADI SHANKARACHARYA

(8th century CE)



ADVAITA

(Non-dualism)

- **Core:** "Brahman alone is real. The world is Maya (illusion). The soul (Atman) IS Brahman."
- **Analogy:** "A rope looks like a snake in darkness. Remove ignorance → see reality."
- **4 MATHAS** established: Sringeri (S), Dwarka (W), Puri (E), Joshimath (N)
- Defeated Buddhists in shastrartha → revived Hinduism

EXAM KEY: Shankaracharya says world is **ILLUSION**. Only Brahman is real.

RAMANUJA

(11th century CE)



VISHISHTADVAITA

(Qualified non-dualism)

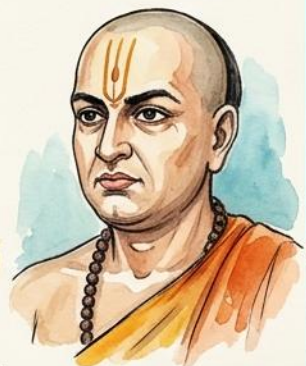
- **Core:** "Brahman is real **AND** the world is real. The world is Brahman's **BODY**."
- **Analogy:** "Soul relates to God as body relates to soul — part of, but not identical."
- Founded **SRI VAISHNAVISM**. Vishnu as supreme.
- **BHAKTI** as the path — not just jnana (knowledge)



EXAM KEY: Ramanuja says world **IS** real — it's God's body. Devotion, not just knowledge.

MADHVACHARYA

(13th century CE)



DVAITA

(Strict dualism)

- Strength to nominat Vaishnavite philosopher.
- **Core:** "God (Vishnu) and soul are **PERMANENTLY** separate. The world is real."
- **Analogy:** "A servant serves the master but never **BECOMES** the master."
- **5 fundamental differences:** God-soul, God-matter, soul-soul, soul-matter, matter-matter

EXAM KEY: Madhva says God and soul are **ALWAYS** different. Most orthodox.

Shankara: World = illusion

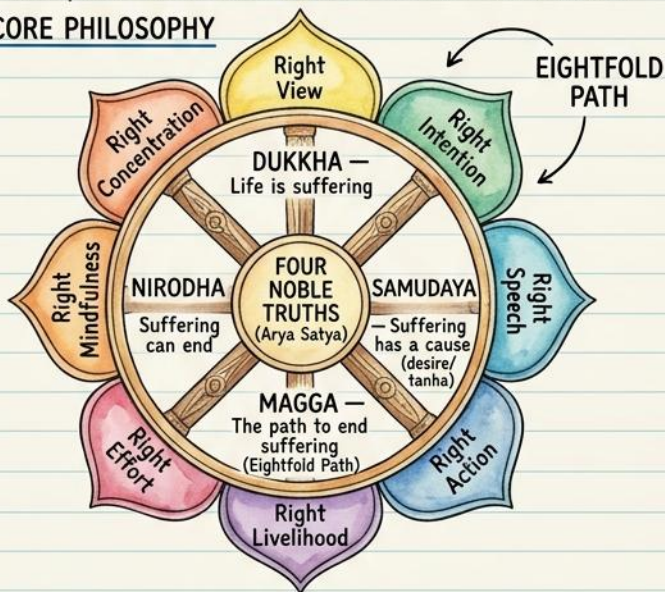
Ramanuja: World = God's body

Madhva: World = real, God ≠ soul

BUDDHISM – THE MIDDLE PATH AND THE QUESTIONS IT ANSWERED

Officer, Buddhism is **NOT** just 'Four Noble Truths + Eightfold Path.' UPSC goes DEEPER – they test the philosophical **DISTINCTIONS** between Buddhist schools, the councils, the sectarian splits. This is where most students lose marks.

THE CORE PHILOSOPHY



KEY PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS tested by UPSC:

ANATTA (No-self):
NO permanent soul.
OPPOSITE of Hindu Atman.

(This is THE fundamental difference between Hinduism and Buddhism)

MADHYAMAKA (Middle Way philosophy – Nagarjuna, 2nd c CE):

Shunyata (emptiness).
Even Buddhist concepts are 'empty' of inherent existence.

PRATIYASAMUTPADA (Dependent Origination):
Nothing exists independently.
Everything arises from causes and conditions. 12-link chain.

YOGACHARA (Mind-only school – Asanga, Vasubandhu, 4th c CE):
External world is a projection of consciousness.

TRILAKSHANA: Three marks of existence – Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (suffering), Anatta (no-self)

EXAM MOMENT ?!

[2014 Q47] UPSC tested Buddhist philosophical concepts.

[2013 Q58] tested Buddhist councils and sects. ? !

[2020 Q71] tested Buddhist traditions. ? !

The TRAP: confusing Theravada with Mahayana positions.

Theravada = individual salvation, Pali, no Buddha-worship.

Mahayana = universal salvation, Sanskrit, Bodhisattva ideal.

THE FOUR COUNCILS — HOW BUDDHISM SPLIT AND SPREAD

Officer, the 4 Buddhist councils are among the MOST tested facts in UPSC Art & Culture. Not just WHAT happened, but the CONSEQUENCES of each council.

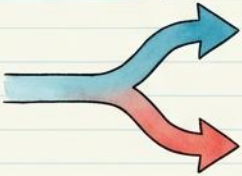
COUNCIL 1 (483 BCE — Rajagriha)



Chairman: MAHAKASSAPA | Patron: AJATASHATRU (Haryanka)
Just after Buddha's death. Disciples worried: teachings would be LOST.
Result: VINAYA PITAKA (discipline) + SUTTA PITAKA (discourses) compiled ORALLY.

Key: Nothing written yet. All memorized.

COUNCIL 2 (383 BCE — Vaishali)



Chairman: SABAKAMI | 100 years after Buddha
Dispute: Monks in Vaishali wanted to RELAX 10 rules (handling gold, eating after noon)
Orthodox monks said NO.

Result: FIRST MAJOR SPLIT → Sthaviravadins (orthodox elders) vs Mahasanghikas

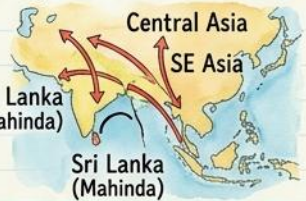
• This split eventually → Theravada vs Mahayana



COUNCIL 3 (250 BCE — Pataliputra)

Chairman: MOGGALIPUTTA TISSA | Patron: ASHOKA
ABHIDHAMMA PITAKA added → TRIPITAKA complete

- Missionaries sent to:
 - Ashoka's SON Mahinda + DAUGHTER Sanghamitta to Sri Lanka



COUNCIL 4 (72 CE — Kundalvana, Kashmir)

Chairman: VASUMITRA (VP: Ashvaghosha) | Patron: KANISHKA (Kushana)

THE BIG SPLIT: HINAYANA (Theravada) vs MAHAYANA



Commentaries written on copper plates in SANSKRIT (not Pali)

THERAVADA:

Individual moksha.
Buddha = teacher.
Pali.
Sri Lanka, SE Asia.



MAHAYANA:

Universal moksha.
Buddha = God.
Bodhisattvas.
Sanskrit. China, Korea.



VAJRAYANA:

Tantric rituals.
Mantras.
Tibet, Mongolia.
Emerged from Mahayana.



JAINISM — THE MOST RIGOROUS PHILOSOPHY IN INDIAN HISTORY

Officer, Jainism is the most **LOGICALLY** rigorous of all Indian philosophies. Its concepts of Anekantavada and Syadvada are philosophically sophisticated enough that modern logicians study them. UPSC loves testing these because students confuse them.



Pillar 1 – ANEKANTAVADA
(Many-sidedness of reality)



Nothing is absolutely true or absolutely false
Reality has **INFINITE** aspects – you can only know **SOME** at a time
The **BLIND MEN AND ELEPHANT** story illustrates this

UPSC traps: Don't confuse with relativism. Anekantavada says truth EXISTS but is COMPLEX.

Pillar 2 – SYADVADA
(Conditional predication – 'maybe' logic)



1. Syad asti – maybe it is
2. Syad nasti – maybe it is not
3. Syad asti nasti maybe it is and is not
4. Syad avaktavya – maybe it is inexpressible
- 5-7: Combinations of above

↑ This is 2500-year-old MULTI-VALUED LOGIC.

Pillar 3 – TRI-RATNA
(Three Jewels)



- Samyak Darshana** (Right Faith)
- Samyak Jnana** (Right Knowledge)
- Samyak Charitra** (Right Conduct)

All **THREE** needed. Not one or two – all three **TOGETHER**.

- 5 VOWS (Pancha Mahavrata):**
- Ahimsa (non-violence – even to MICROORGANISMS)
 - Satya (truth)
 - Asteya (non-stealing)
 - Aparigraha (non-possession)
 - Brahmacharya (celibacy – MAHAVIRA'S addition)

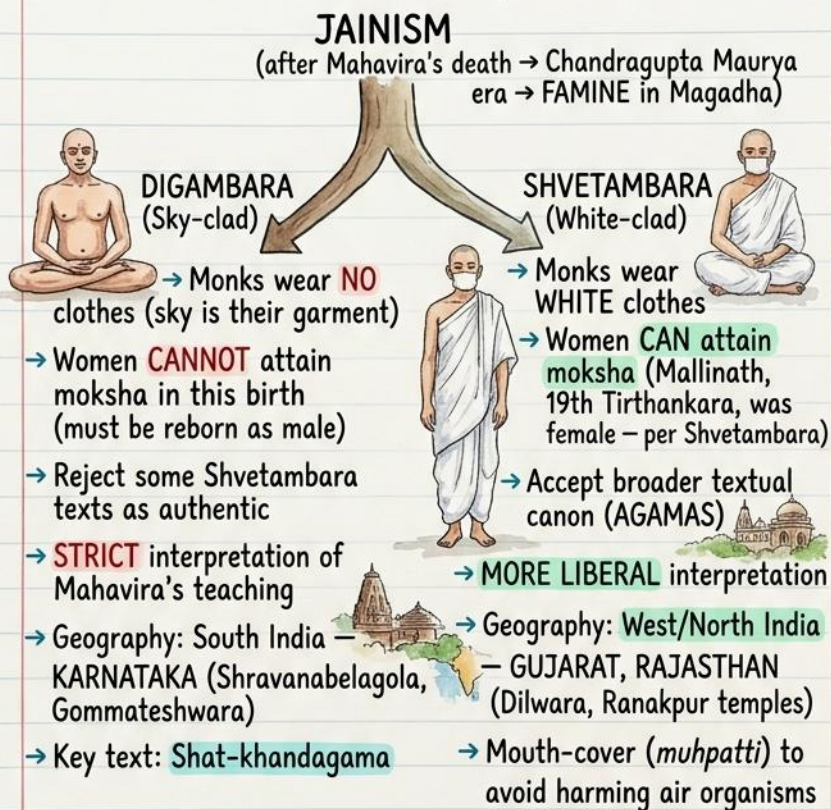
EXAM MOMENT

[2014 Q54] UPSC tested Anekantavada vs Syadvada distinction.
[2014 Q90] tested Jain philosophical concepts.

Know the **DIFFERENCE**:
Anekantavada = ontological (nature of reality).
Syadvada = epistemological (nature of knowledge).

THE GREAT JAIN SPLIT — AND WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

Officer, the Digambara-Shvetambara split isn't just a clothing debate. It reflects deep philosophical disagreements about the NATURE of liberation. UPSC tests these differences specifically.



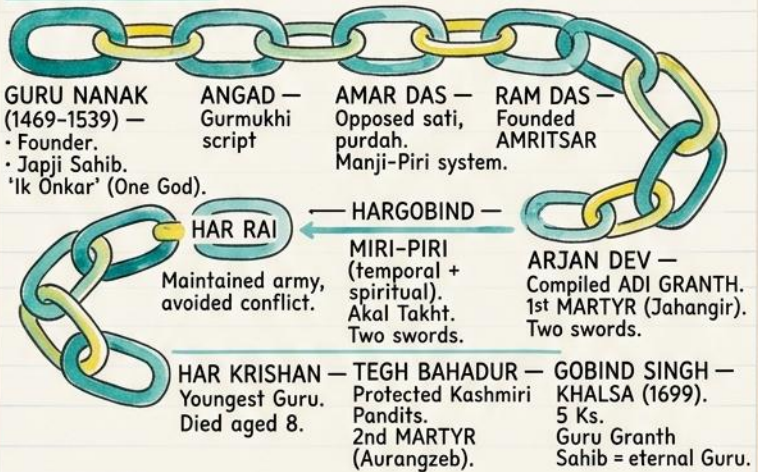
Feature	Digambara	Shvetambara
Clothing	None	White
Women's moksha	No (this birth)	Yes
19 th Tirthankara	Male (Mallinatha)	Female (Mallinath)
Geography	South (Karnataka)	West (Gujarat/Rajasthan)
Texts	Shat-khandagama	Agamas

! EXAM MOMENT: [2022 Q95] UPSC tested Jain sect differences. The KEY trap: confusing which sect allows women's liberation.

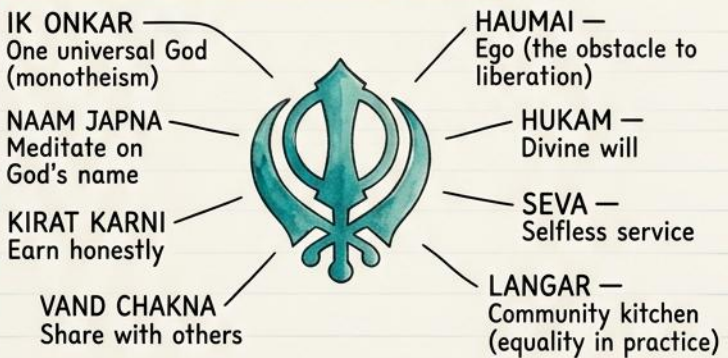
SIKHISM — WHEN SYNTHESIS BECAME A NEW FAITH

Officer, Sikhism isn't just Bhakti + Sufism combined. It's a distinct philosophy that took IDEAS from both but created something ENTIRELY new. Understanding what's borrowed and what's original is how UPSC tests this.

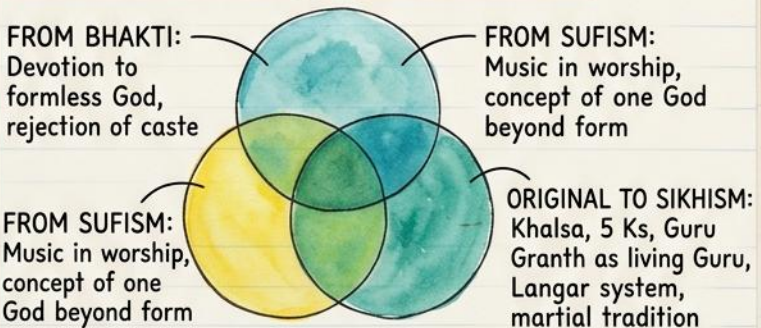
GURU LINEAGE



KEY PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS



WHAT'S BORROWED, WHAT'S ORIGINAL



SUFISM — ISLAM'S MYSTICAL HEART IN INDIA

Officer, Sufism is **NOT** a separate religion. It's the **MYSTICAL** dimension of Islam — the pursuit of direct experience of God through love, music, and devotion. In India, it became the **BRIDGE** between Hindu and Muslim communities. UPSC tests the **ORDERS** (silsilahs) and their differences.

ORDER 1: CHISHTI (Most popular in India) 🎵🎵

CHARACTER: Close to **COMMON** people.
Music in worship (sama).
REJECTED state patronage. Austere.
EXAM KEY: Chishti = music (Qawwali)
+ rejected power + closest to masses



SUFI CONCEPTS:

Murshid (master) → Murid (disciple). Khanqah (hospice). Sama (devotional music). Fana (annihilation of ego in God) — compare with Hindu concept of Moksha. Wahdat-ul-Wujud (Unity of Being — Ibn Arabi) ≈ Advaita?

PYQ WALKTHROUGHS – 13 QUESTIONS, 13 LESSONS

Officer, with 13 PYQs, this is the most tested Art & Culture topic. Let me show you the PATTERNS.

[2019 Q9] – Buddhist traditions and practices

Step 1: Read carefully – does it ask about THERAVADA or MAHAYANA?

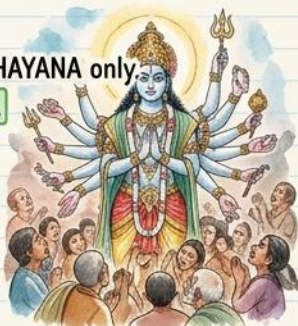
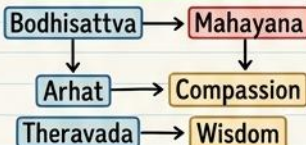
Step 2: Theravada = older, conservative, Pali.

Mahayana = later, liberal, Sanskrit.

Step 3: If option mentions Bodhisattva → MAHAYANA only.



ANCHOR: Bodhisattva = Mahayana.
Arhat = Theravada.



[2018 Q71] – Vedantic philosophy comparison

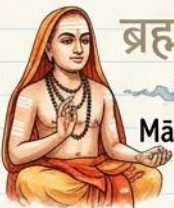
Step 1: Shankaracharya = Advaita (world is illusion)

Step 2: Ramanuja = Vishishtadvaita (world is God's body)

Step 3: If option says 'Shankaracharya believed world is real' → ELIMINATE

ANCHOR: Illusion=Shankara. Body-of-God=Ramanuja.

Separate=Madhva.



Māya →

world

परमात्मा
(Brahman)



परमात्मा

ॐ

प्रकृति

[2013 Q37] – Jain philosophical concepts

Step 1: Anekantavada = many-sidedness (about REALITY)

Step 2: Syadvada = conditional predication (about KNOWLEDGE/LANGUAGE)

Step 3: If option conflates the two → ELIMINATE

ANCHOR: Anekanta = what IS. Syad = what we can SAY.

Anekantavada
(Multi-sided Reality)



Syad-Asti
In some sense
it is

Syad-Nasti
In some sense
it is not

Syad-Avaktavyah
In some sense it is
inexpressible

Syad-Asktavyah
In some sense it his

Syadvada
(Conditional Knowledge)



PATTERN ACROSS ALL 13 PYQs:

- Buddhism concepts: 5 PYQs (38%)
- Jainism concepts: 3 PYQs (23%)
- Hindu philosophy: 2 PYQs (15%)
- Bhakti/Sufism: 2 PYQs (15%)
- Sikhism: 1 PYQ (8%)

CONCLUSION: Buddhism + Jainism = 61% of Religion PYQs. Master these two FIRST.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY — THE COMPLETE MIND MAP

ORTHODOX

(Astika — accept Vedas)

6 Schools:

- | Samkhya+Yoga
- | Nyaya+Vaisheshika
- | Mimamsa+Vedanta



Vedanta sub-schools:

- | Advaita (Shankara)
- | Vishishtadvaita (Ramanuja)
- | Dvaita (Madhva)

HETERODOX

(Nastika — reject Vedas)

Buddhism: 4 Councils

→ Theravada + Mahayana + Vajrayana

Jainism:

| Digambara + Shvetambara
| Anekantavada + Syadvada

Ajivika: Makkhali Gosala

↳ fatalism — extinct

INDIAN RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

13 PYQs DISTRIBUTION



13 PYQs DISTRIBUTION

- Buddhism: 38%
- Jainism: 23%
- Hindu schools: 15%
- Bhakti/Sufism: 15%
- Sikhism: 8%

BHAKTI

(7th-17th c)

South (earliest):

- ↳ Alvars + Nayanars
- ↳ Karnataka: Basavanna
- ↳ Maharashtra: Jnaneshwar to Tukaram

North: Nirguna

(Kabir, Nanak, Ravidas)
| Saguna (Tulsidas, Surdas, Meerabai, Chaitanya)

SIKHISM

10 Gurus: Nanak
→ Gobind Singh.
Khalsa (1699).
5 Ks. Guru Granth Sahib.

SUFISM

- Chishti (Ajmer, popular)
- Suhrawardi (state, Multan)
- Qadiri (moderate)
- Naqshbandi (orthodox)

WHERE RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY LEADS

Officer, this is the **DENSEST** topic you've studied so far. But here's the beautiful thing – everything in Art & Culture is connected through **Religion & Philosophy**.

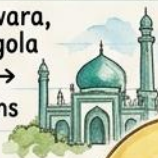
The temples exist **BECAUSE** of these beliefs. The dances tell **THESE** stories. The paintings illustrate **THESE** texts. The festivals celebrate **THESE** events.

CONNECTION WEB



→ ARCHITECTURE (AC 1.1)

Jainism → Dilwara, Shranabelagola
Islam/Sufism → Mosques, Dargahs



PERFORMING ARTS (AC 1.3)

Natya Shastra → all 8 classical dances
Bhakti → Kirtan, Bhajan, Qawwali
Sattriya dance → from Shankaradeva's Vaishnavism



RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

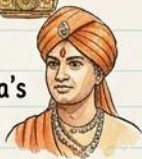
→ TRADITIONS & FESTIVALS (AC 1.6 – NEXT)

Hindu festivals → religious calendar
Buddhist festivals → Buddha Purnima, Vesak
Sufi → Urs celebrations
Sikh → Baisakhi, Gurburab



POLITY (GS-2)

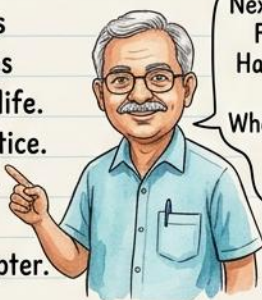
Secularism in India → product of India's religious diversity
Article 25-28 → freedom of religion
National symbols → Ashoka's Lion Capital (Buddhist origin!)



HISTORY (GS-1)

Every dynasty question connects to religious patronage
Ashoka → Buddhism.
Guptas → Hindu revival.
Mughals → syncretic culture.

Officer, in Traditions & Festivals next, you'll see these philosophies come **ALIVE** in everyday Indian life. Kumbh Mela is Hinduism in practice. Durga Puja is Bhakti as festival. Every tradition you study has philosophical DNA from **THIS** chapter.



Next: Traditions, Festivals & Handicrafts — 10 PYQs. Where philosophy becomes celebration.

THE COMPLETE BELIEF TREE OF INDIA

ALL traditions ask the **SAME** questions:
 What is the soul? What is God?
 How do we end suffering?
 What is the right way to live?

BHAKTI (7th-17th c)
 ↳ Alvars, Nayanars, Kabir, Tulsidas, Meerabai



SUFISM (12th c onward)
 ↳ Chishti, Suhrawardi, Qadiri, Naqshbandi



SIKHISM (1469)
 ↳ Guru Nanak
 ↳ Guru Gobind Singh
 ↳ Guru Granth Sahib



ASTIKA
 (Orthodox — accept Vedas)

NASTIKA
 (Heterodox — reject Vedas)

Samkhya (Kapila)
 ↳ Dualism, Purusha+Prakriti




Yoga (Patanjali)
 ↳ 8-fold practice



BUDDHISM (Siddhartha, 563 BCE)
 ↳ Theravada | Mahayana | Vajrayana



Nyaya (Gautama)
 ↳ Formal logic



JAINISM (Mahavira, 540 BCE)
 ↳ Digambara | Shvetambara




Vaisheshika (Kanada)
 ↳ Atomism



AJIVIKA (Gosala)
 determinism — Fatalism
 ↳ **EXTINCT**

Mimamsa (Jaimini)
 ↳ Ritual action



Vedanta (Badarayana)
 ↳ Advaita | Vishishtadvaita | Dvaita

Vedic tradition (1500 BCE) — Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda

