A Taxonomy of Indic Thought

A modular companion piece, intended for use a quick reference, for my "Genealogy of Indian Religious and Social Change" book and the "India: A Guide for the Perplexed" wiki

v0.5, pending additions: dates, reformat to tables, taxa, expanded details and lists, more examples, corrections



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"→" in this document indicates lineage, derivation or continuation. Headings are organized to the extent possible in the order of evolution, from earliest to latest or specifically derived.

Vedas

The Vedic Corpus

The vedas and the component works embedded with it are called ***shruthi***, "that which is heard", the foundational texts of orthodox hinduism, and the foundational or competing texts by opposition or offshoot in heterodox hinduism or indic religion. The "source" of shruthis is interpreted variously, but the general consensus is of it as being poetry inspired by a glimpse of the divine or from contact with the divine by gifted, enlightened *rishis* ("seers").

Note that this is different from "revelation" and "prophet"-- the vedas are not considered as purposely revealed by god to a chosen person, for a particular medium.

Everything apart from these *shruthis* is considered ***smriti*** ("that which is remembered" / tradition), written purely by intelligent, learned or opinionated humans in commentary or to build on top of shruthis. Many smritis are not spiritually binding beyond the choice of a kingdom to enact them or a specific populace believing them.

The Vedas were an entirely oral tradition, passed on by memorization and segregating sections and recensions within different families, before eventually being compiled and written down well into the civilizational and urban age of India, likely post 1000BC. These oral and written sub-schools are called ***Shakhas***.

The Vedas:

- ***Rigveda*** *(the oldest veda, most unique, containing as-yet partially untranslated "indo-european" hymns from at least as old as 1500BC, different from the later vedas in language and tone, but the beginning of a still existing, morphing continuity)*

  Remaining shakhas (many lost):
  Shakala (more popular), *Bashakala*

  Note that while the translation of portions in it is contested, what has been admired by both indigenous followers and foreign academics is the unprecedented high fidelity and completeness of its transmission, which is unlike any other oral tradition

or religious work from that time period (2000-1500BC), and is the most well preserved contiguous piece of bronze age/iron age history in the world.

- ***Samaveda*** (*rigvedic stanzas set to early melodic patterns*)
  Remaining shakhas (many lost):
  Kauthuma, Ranayaniya, Jaiminiya

- ***Shukla Yajurveda*** *(primarily mantras and rituals)*
  Remaining shakhas (many lost):
  Madhyandina, *Kanva*

- ***Krishna Yajurveda*** *(primarily mantras and rituals)*
  Remaining shakhas (many lost):
  Taittiriya, Maitrayani, Kathaka, Kapisthala

- ***Atharvaveda*** *(creating, representing and/or codifying the popular vedic religion and culture of the time)*
  Remaining shakhas: *Shaunaikya, Paippalada*
  *(*named lost recensions: *Stauda, Mauda, Jajala, Brahmavada, Devadarsa, Caranavaidya*)

Each veda is split into, in the most common descending order of importance and mass engagement (though it actually depends on the community):

- *Samhita* (the main metrical/poetical work)
- *Upanishad (exploratory philosophical works on the samhitas)*
- *Brahmanas (instructive texts on rituals and processes)*
- *Aranyakas (insights into the meanings of rituals, practices and symbols)*

Upanishads

Compiled along with each veda, over time, is one or more upanishads, which are ruminative or explorative pieces on the themes of the vedas. The ones listed here are considered *Shruthi*. Later Upanishads not mentioned here are considered *Smriti*.

- Rigvedic: *Aitreya, Kaushitaki*
- Samavedic: *Chandogya, Kena*
- Yajurvedic: *Brihadaranyaka, Isha, Taittiriya, Katha, Shvetashvatara, Maitiri*
- Atharvavedic: *Mandukya, Mundaka, Prashna*

These form what are known as the ***principal upanishads.*** Many of the names of the Upanishads are derived from the name of the vedic rishi or family they are attributed to ex. Aitreya, Kaushitaki, Manduki, Shvetashvara, Taittiriya. The upanishads, even after being superseded in ritual and spiritual importance by later works and social change, are considered to represent the soul of (pre-puranic) Hinduism. They are still among the most accessible and universal of formal hindu thought, to this day. They stand alongside the informal and ubiquitous folkloric adaptations of the Panchatantra and Jataka Tales as well as

the formal Itihasas (like the Ramayana and Mahabharatha) as being among the fastest and best introductions to the core of Indian philosophy and cultural history for those new to it.

Indic Languages

The sanskritic language of the early vedas can be starkly different from the sanskrit of even a few hundred years after it, and many vedic texts especially the Rig Veda have numerous *Hapax Legomena* (words that appear only once in a text, whose meaning was forgotten over time and is difficult to discover or reconstruct from context) as well as later cultural, historical, ideological and sectarian differences in the etymology of words.

This was one of the primary motivations for the subsequent creation of *the Vedangas.*

Vedic Languages:
Early/Rigvedic/Ancient Sanskrit (Rigveda)→ Later Vedic Sanskrit (Atharvaveda and Yajurveda) → Upanishadic Sanskrit → Classical Sanskrit (formalization elucidated by *Panini*)→ Puranic Sanskrit → Medieval Sanskrit → Modern Sanskrit → Revivalist Sanskrit (post 1900s)

Daughter language/related languages:
Prakrit (Common People Sanskrit) → *Apabrahmsas* → Medieval and modern indian state/ethnic languages (not including the dravidian languages, though there was significant borrowing, especially in languages like Telugu, Tamil and in the formal registers of southern languages)

Relation to other languages:

A “cognate” is a word, language, or entity that shares a common ancestral origin. In the case of a language, it is etymological, in the case of a concept or practice, it is cultural or historical.

Sanskrit, from ancient to post-Paninian, has numerous cognates with words, names of gods, concepts and practices in other indo-european cultures of the time, proving a relationship between them, but not proving the nature, timeline or direction of the relationship and exchange.**

Avestan/Zoroastrianism is the most geographically close and densely similar, Greek and the Nordic languages/culture perhaps the most geographically distant.

Vedic Rishis/Families

Vedic Rishis were semi-legendary/semi-mythological/semi-historical authors of the vedas: ***Atri, Bharadvaja, Gautama Maharishi, Jamadagni, Kashyapa, Vasistha, Vishvamitra, Angiras, Bhrigu, Kutsa, Marichi, Pulaha, Pulastya, Kratu, Agastya.***

Names from this list are often organized into ***Saptarishis***– 7 great sages. The selected names in this list changes over time and depending on sect.

There were also female rishis, called *Rishikas,* and further the wives/husbands of many of these seers were often also seers or poets themselves and significant figures in legend. These include, Ghosha, Vagambhrini, Anasuya, Gargi, Shandilya, Lopamudra + Agastya, Maitreyi + Yajnavalkya, Arundhati + Vashishta

Many of these rishis, rishikas, and their spouses are considered starting points of various lineages and "***gotras***"(patrilinear/male clan lineages), and many of these are compiled from later smriti texts, not shruthis. These have been most significant in Brahmin communities, and the gotra systems of other castes borrow/intersect with these.

These indic/hindu lineages are mostly of historic and cultural importance, and do not have the rigour and use case of modern genealogical methods, nor do they reliably predict significant genetic links between specific individuals in isolation.

They are fundamentally derived from a mixture of *shruti*, *itihas (legendary history)* to establish/name a patrilineal line (i.e it tracks the Y chromosome to whatever extent the family records allow), folkloric/puranic revision or expansion, individual records, caste-based genealogy and religious/ethnocultural faith.

The Vahivancha Barots are an example of a traditional community/caste of genealogists, usually based out of ancient and current Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Pilgrimage cities like Varanasi and Ujjain (their records relying on family members visiting those places over the long history of those cities).

Tangential to the idea of bloodlines are the everchanging and evolving concepts of:

Varna (socioeconomic, sociopolitical or sociospiritual classes/divisions/responsibilities) and ***Jati*** (sub-classes of varna or separate classes of tribal, geographical, linguistic and occupational divisions typically enforced by endogamy and/or tribalist conflict). These are thought to have arisen in the mid- to post-vedic age (1000BC).

Varnas are typically divided into:

- ***Brahmin*** (Priests and knowledge workers)
- ***Kshatriya*** (kings and warriors)
- ***Vaishya*** (merchants and traders)
- ***Shudra*** (roughly: artisans, actors, labourers, common citizens and everyone else).

These classifications were variously prescriptive, descriptive, or predictive and diagnostic (of attributes and traits) in different times and different places.

Chandala, Avarna or Panchama *(*now called ***Dalits***) are a wide grouping of people who do not belong inside the varna system, but most often belong to a *jati*, and form the fifth strata of society– "untouchables". This has been variously prescriptive, descriptive, legalist or

pejorative across time and place, *but any of those usually led to significant social ostracization.*

Unlike rigvedic bloodlines and varnas, *jatis* have high fidelity of genetic information due to the practice of endogamy, inter-*jati* conflict, presence of each in a single geography over a long period of time and the preservation of the jati name as the surname and of family/village deities and local folklore. Even where a historical or religious text does not encode historical information for a certain time, often *jatis* do, though in isolation, not always with corroboration and by oral transmission only.

There are more than 3000 jatis in India, some preserve their history, endogamy and conflicts, some are preserved only in name or on paper. Some of the most well-known and numerous jatis include: *Yadavs, Jats, Marathas, Kolis, Reddys, Vanniyars, Gujjars, Jatav, Chamar, Thakurs, Rajputs, Mahar, Valmiki, Iyengars, Iyers.*

Varnas, *jatis and dalit divisions* were combined taxonomically together by the British Empire to form the modern (19th century ACE onwards) amalgamated concept of *Caste,* to simplify their sociological study, census and especially administration of the Indian populace.

These ancient historical divisions and British administrative categories were repurposed and then used by the Republic of India (post-1947 ACE) to create **four large categories** for ease of inter-caste and inter-tribe outreach and targeted social development like education, reservations, support and promotion of local culture, and economic assistance:

***Scheduled Castes (SCs)*, *Scheduled Tribes (STs)*, Other *Backward Classes (OBCs)*, and the *General Category (Unreserved)*.**

This system of administration is still in place (as of 2026 ACE) and regardless of a general agreement of the post-independence government's good intent and noble goals, this was and still is deeply controversial.

Vedic Tribes

The following names are of vedic tribes, attested from the rigveda all the way up to the puranas. The ones in bold are canonically linked to various important vedas, works, stories, legends, demigods, gods, kings, kingdoms, families, gotras, jatis, and much later, castes.

Bhrigu, Angira, Vasishtha, Kashyapa, Atri, Gautama, Kanwa, Vishwamitra, Jamadagni, Yadu, Ikshvaku, Kuru, Panchala, Bharadvaja, Tritsu, **Kutsa**, **Grtsamada, Kaushika**, **Vidath**, **Puru, Vrishni, Bharata, Yayati,** Druhyu, Turvasha, Anu, Ushinara, Kikata, Usinara, Alina, Matsya, Satvat, Matheya, Parikshit, Yayavar, Videha, Vayadha, Babhruvahana, Srinjaya, Janamejaya, Sindhudvipa, Videgha, Karusha, Gandhari, Matsya, Nabhagi, Yaksha, Anu, Yamuna, Turvasu

Vedic Deities

Note that as the rigveda is a partially untranslated work, many of these deities and roles are contested within it. **Therefore, their establishment within the roles mentioned here and popularly conceived are sometimes a result of a subsequent etymological, foreign academic and indigenous cultural reinterpretation and reimagining**. This is especially significant as the rise of monist hinduism absorbed and interpreted the soul, personhood, roles and traits of all deities and beings as attributes, potentials or aspirants of the singular *Brahman*– the uniting ultimate principle. Therefore a “clean” reading and definition is currently near-impossible.

- ***Agni:*** *The god of fire, associated with sacrificial rituals and divine communication.*
- ***Indra:*** *The king of gods, associated with thunder, lightning, and rain, often portrayed as a warrior.*
- ***Varuna:*** *The god of cosmic order and the keeper of cosmic law (rta).*
- ***Mitra:*** *Associated with contracts, agreements, and the maintaining of social order. Mitra and Varuna are sometimes amalgamated as Mitra-Varuna, as their realms converge.*
- ***Surya:*** *The sun god, symbolizing light, warmth, and life.*
- ***Vayu:*** *The god of the wind.*
- ***Ushas:*** *The goddess of dawn.*
- ***Prithvi:*** *The earth goddess.*
- ***Aditi:*** *mother of all gods, representing infinity and boundlessness.*
- ***Soma:*** *The deified ritual drink, associated with the moon. Its original identity and role is long forgotten and/or contested.*
- ***Savitri:*** *A solar deity, conflated with and/or associated with the life-giving energy of the sun.*
- ***Saraswati:*** *The goddess of knowledge, speech, and wisdom.*
- ***Rudra:*** *An early form of Shiva, associated with storms, howling, and healing.*
- ***Pushan:*** *The god of nourishment and the guardian of flocks.*
- ***Brihaspati:*** *The god of wisdom and the chief priest of the gods.*
- ***Vishnu:*** *In the later Vedic texts, Vishnu is mentioned but not as extensively as in later Puranic literature. His attributes are less defined in the early Vedic period.*

Other gods (synonymic names not differentiated) include:

Dyaus Pitr, Tvastar, Parjanya, Savitar, Yama, Maruts, Adityas, Ashvins, Apah, Lakshmi, Ila, Ratri, Rodasi, Aranyani, Nirrti, Vak, Anila, Yami, Yama, Chandra, Surya, Aja, Ugra, Asvayujau, Haryasvas, Ribhus, Vishvakarman, Vivasvat, Antaryami, Bhaga, Dhatr, Aryaman, Sukra, Yuvanashtra, Vastospati, Vanaspati, Ahirbudhnya, Prabhasa, Rbhus, Dhatri, Ushija, Satya, Samudra, Apam Napat, Sarama, Trita, Tritiya, Atri, Agnayi, Vayunandana, Kavi, Sita, Vishvarupa

Many of these names have cognates with gods or concepts in other indo-european cultures of the time, proving a relationship between them, but not proving the nature, timeline or direction of the relationship and exchange.

Evolution

Vedas and their component pieces → ***Vedangas***

Vedangas

These are first smriti schools, the “limbs” of the vedas, or analysis of the vedas:

- *Shiksha*/learning and teaching of the oral tradition (phonetics, pronounciation)
    - Foundational/extant works: Pratishakyas (Rig Veda Pratishakya and *Saunakiya Chaturadhyayika* by Sage Shaunaka, Taittiriya Pratishakya, Vajasaneyi Pratishakya by Katyayana, Sama Veda Pratishakya)
- *Vyakarana/*grammar
    - Foundational/extant works: *Ashtadhyayi by Panini (extant), pre-Panani grammars (lost)*
- *Nirukta*/etymology
    - Foundational/extant works: *Nirukta by Yaska, pre-Yaska (lost)*
- *Chandas*/metre
    - Foundational/extant works: *Chandahshastra by Pingala*
- *Kalpa/*rituals, methods, duties and conduct
    - Foundational/extant works: Various kalpa sutras within the vedas, and dharmasutras by Apastambha, Gautama, Baudhyayana and many more
- *Jyotisha/*astrology and astronomy
    - Foundational/extant works: *Vedanga Jyositha by Lagadha*

Vedangas → Sastras and Core Smritis

Sastras and Core Smritis

→ *Itihasa/*history and legends ex. *The Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha,* by *Veda Vyasa.* There are many versions of these texts, which many people over time have attempted to reconcile and compile into one (most recently, the BORI compendium and Bhandarkar Institute) The world-famous *Bhagavatgita* and the popular version of the *Vishnusahasranama* come from specific chapters within the most popular recensions of the Mahabharatha*,* though modern renditions are heavily layered over time with interpolations, commentaries, and changes.

The Bhagavatgita (5th century - 2nd Century BCE) stands out as being a rare indic example of a direct, expansive, prescriptive treatise from a supreme god (Krishna) to a legendary mortal, and the closest analogue to a biblical-style work in indian culture. **However, apart from those inside krishnaist sects, it is not treated that way in everyday life.**

→ *Dharmasastra/*law and moral books ex. *Manusmriti, Yajnavalkyasmriti, Naradasmriti,* these are to be differentiated from the kalpa vedanga texts and oral traditions called the *Dharmasutras.*

→ *Arthasastra/*civilizational treatises, ex. The eponymous *Arthasastra of Chankaya*

→ *Kamasutras/*art and pleasure, ex. The eponymous *Kamasutra of Vatsyayana*

→ *Mokshasastras/*treatises on spiritual liberation

→ *Nibhandas* and *Nītiśāstras* are compilations, compendiums and guides which are further commentaries and text building onto Dharmasastras, Arthasastras, Kama treatises and other texts (for example, Ayurveda is derived from foundational works like the *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*), another example may be the *Natyasastra,* which is a foundational text in Indian classical dance. Among the most widely popular of the *Nītiśāstras* include the Panchatantra and the Jataka Tales, which are used as children's fables and moral education.

→ *Agamas,* a particular type and genre of hindu texts that continue or comment on the vedas and various philosophies, some proponents consider it *shruthi*, though this view is heterodox

→ *Kavya/*poetry, epics and poems deriving inspiration from the *itihasas, puranas,* and other past and contemporary culture*,* famous examples include *Raghuvamsa* by Kalidasa, *Kiratarjuniya* by Bharavi, *Sisupala Vadha* by Magha, *Buddhacarita* by Ashvagosha, *Yadavadhyudaya* by Vedanta Desika

→ *Bhasyas/*direct commentaries on primary and secondary texts, and on work by the author's peers

→ *Puranas,* large collections of texts preserved, compiled and changed over time. **The Puranas are the most major source or eventual storehouse of modern *popular deistic hinduism***, **hindu culture, religious historiography, philology, folklore, from legends and the names of gods to the most important *Utsavas/***festivals, within the Indian subcontinent and its spheres of influence like southeast asia.

In brackets are the major sampradayas they are primary *smriti* texts for, which are detailed in a following section.

- Major Puranas:
    - Brahma Purana (Multiple Gods)
    - Padma Purana (Multiple Gods)
    - Vishnu Purana (Vaishnavism)
    - Shiva Purana (Shaivism)
    - Bhagavata Purana (Krishnaism/Bhakti)
    - Narada Purana (Vaishnavism/Multiple Gods)
    - Garuda Purana (Vaishnavism)
    - Agni Purana (Multiple Gods)
    - Markandeya Purana (Multiple Gods, Shaktism/Devi Worship, non-sectarian deism)
    - Brahma Vaivarta Purana (Vaishnavism, Krishnaism)
    - Linga Purana (Shaivism)
    - Varaha Purana (Vaishnavism)

- Skandapurana (Murugan/Karthikeya worship within Shaivism)
- Vamana Purana (Vaishnavism or Shaivism, depending on recension)
- Kurma Purana (Vaishnavism)
- Matsya Purana (Vaishnavism)
- Brahmanda Purana/Vayu Purana (Multiple Gods, non-sectarian deism, Devi Worship)
- Bhavishyapurana (prophecies, late medieval philosophy, non-sectarian),

→ *Darshana/Sampradayas,* defined ideological traditions or lineages, started by one or more founding figures, maintained, preserved and developed along its rules by their students and followers.

Usually linked with a rishi or set of rishis, *matha*, temple, city, region, kingdom, or specific center of learning.

These are the most important sources of religious *differences* between indic believers.

Darshanas

Deriving from the *Vedas* (Samhita, Upanishad, Brahmana, Aranyaka), the *Vedangas* as well as the cultural and civilizational contexts of the time (especially Puranic and deist influences), were the development of various philosophical schools attempting to form a coherent worldview.

Among the many aspects of existence argued were: ***Brahman*** (the all-encompassing absolute universal consciousness), ***Ishvara*** (god) and ***Bhakti*** (devotion/divine love), ***Atman*** (soul), ***Chaitanya*** (consciousness), ***Dharma*** (ethics, duties, civilizational thought and behaviour, morality, good character, world order), ***Samsara*** (birth/rebirth), ***Gunas*** (traits/trait inheritance/trait permanence), ***Swabhava*** (innate or intrinsic natures of people), ***Karma*** (material and metaphysical cause and effect), ***Maya*** (the changing states or illusions of material reality), ***Satya*** (truth, reality, existence), ***Brahmavidya*** (ontology, phenomenology), ***Sannyasa*** (asceticism) and ***Grihasta*** (wordliness/householding), ***Yajna*** *(vedic-derived rituals)* and ***Puja*** (post-vedic worship), ***Pramana*** (epistemology and epistemic authority), ***Tattva*** (metaphysical components), ***Nyaya or Gnana*** (logic and knowledge), ***Bhava*** (emotional states), ***Manasa*** (mind), ***Vac*** (speech/words), ***Shabda*** (sound/word), or ***Bhasha*** (spoken tongues). and perhaps most importantly ***Moksha*** **(final purpose, salvation and soteriology)**.

The previously mentioned concepts of ***Varna*** and ***Jati*** interact closely with these discussions with varying levels of importance, across various times and places, with both the most ancient (pre-1000 BCE) and the most modern forms of Hinduism (Post-1957 ACE) giving it the least importance, and the medieval (post 300 ACE) to pre-modern (1900 ACE) period placing the greatest.

The most well-attested division of darshanas is as follows:

1.***Āstika Darshanas/***Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy (accept the validity of the vedas, of *ishvara*/god and *atman*/persistent self or soul or substance– and therefore reincarnation and afterlife of some form).

There are six major well-attested ones, called the *Shaddarshanas.* There were many more, but we will stick with the traditional six as a way to simplify tracking lineage.

Of these astika darshanas, only Yoga and Vedanta survive as distinct frameworks, the rest became incorporated or diluted into those schools, and so subsequently, became underlying aspects of mainstream large-scale religious and philosophical thought.

- ***Nyaya***, the school of logic and knowledge, associated with **Rishi Gautama**
  - Foundational/extant works: *Nyaya sutra* (lost)
- ***Vaisheshika***, the naturalist/proto-scientific school, associated with by **Rishi Kanada**
  - Foundational/extant works: *Vaisheshika sutra*
- ***Samkhya***, the dualist metaphysical school, associated with **Rishi Kapila**
  - Foundational/extant works: Original sutras (lost), *Samkhya karika by Ishvarakrishna*
- ***Yoga***, the psychological and transcendental school, associated with **Rishi Patanjali**
  - Foundational/extant works: *Patanjali Sutra*
- ***Mimamsa*** *or* ***Purva Mimamsa***, the ritualistic and proto-empirical school, associated with **Rishi Jaimini**
  - Foundational/extant works: *Mimamsa sutra*
- ***Uttara Mimamsa*** *or* ***Vedanta,*** associated with ***Sage Badrayana***
  - Foundational/extant works: *Brahma sutra*

    Vedas → Vedangas + Prasthanatrayi (explained below) + other influences → Vedantas.

Vedantas

The vedantas are *astika*. The vedanta schools compete and conflict with each other, but they share an axiomatic reverence for three foundational texts or sources called the *Prasthanatrayi.*

The Prasthanatrayti comprises of:

1. *The Upanishads*, the Shruthi prasthanam, or the axiomatic revelatory starting point of the system
2. *The Bhagavad Gita*, or the Smriti prasthanam, or the daily practical guide to the system
3. *Brahmasutras*, or the Nyaya prasthanam, the logical and formulative basis for the system

Deriving from this axiomatic canon, the most popular, attested, extant and influential vedantas are:

- ***Advaita Vedanta*** *(non-dualist)*, associated with **Adi Shankaracharya**
  - Foundational/extant works:
- ***Vishishtadvaita Vedanta*** *(qualified dualist)*, associated with **Sri Ramanujacharya**
  - Foundational/extant works:
- ***Dvaita Vedanta*** *(dualist)*, associated with **Sri Madhavacharya**
  - Foundational/extant works:
- ***Bhedabheda Vedanta*** *(dualist-nondualist synthesis)*, associated with **Sri Bhaskara**
  - Foundational/extant works:
- ***Dvaitadvaita Vedanta*** *(dualist-nondualist synthesis)*, associated with **Rishi Nimbarka**
  - Foundational/extant works:
- ***Achintya Bheda Abhedha Vedanta*** *(dualist-nondualist uncertainty)* , associated with **Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu**
  - Foundational/extant works:

Note: In Indian philosophy, the dualist debate may refer to mind vs. matter, god vs. consciousness, god vs reality/material, nature vs consciousness, and it shares several similarities with western debates on dualism.

2. ***Nāstika Darshanas****/*Heterodox Schools of Indian Philosophy (reject the shruti status or absolute authority of the vedas, do not necessarily believe in *ishvara* and *atman,* and even if they do, they do not necessarily believe in reincarnation).

- *Charvaka/Lokayata*, associated with Rishi Brhaspati and Ajita Kesakambali
  - Foundational/extant works:
- *Buddha Dhamma*/Buddhism, founded by Siddhartha Gautama (“The Buddha”)
  - Foundational/extant works:
- *Jaina Dharma*/Jainism, founded by Lord Mahavira
  - Foundational/extant works:
- *Ajivika*, associated with Makkhali Gosala
  - Foundational/extant works:
- *Ajnana*, associated with Sanjaya Belatthiputta
  - Foundational/extant works:
- *Pakhuda Kaccayana*, a teacher associated with his particular philosophy
  - Foundational/extant works:
- *Purana Kassapa*, a teacher associated with his particular philosophy
  - Foundational/extant works:

Some of these are also called *Sramanas,* a word indicating the importance those philosophies place on living differently/authentically according to one’s beliefs, toil/self-sacrifice, and asceticism or monkishness in achieving their philosophical goals.

Of these schools, the only nastika schools that survived and have thrived as distinct traditions are two Sramanas: *Buddhadharma* (Buddhism) and *Jainadharma* or *Nigrantha* (Jainism).

Evolution

Darshanas and Vedantas → Sampradayas, Paramparas, and Derivative Darshanas

Sampradayas

Sampradayas often incorporated one or more of the *astika shaddharshanas* and *nastika darshanas* as their underlying frameworks, and then further incorporated themselves into one or more of the following: national, royal, regional, ethnic, cultural, deistic, monistic, religious, ethnoreligious, enthocultural, ethnolinguistic, or varna-based, jati-based or caste-based precedents or frameworks.

The official learning, preservation and dissemination of every sampradaya is almost always under a structure of **strict guru-shishya parampara,** a system in which a tradition and author's lineage (and therefore reliability) is tracked through a specific deity or idea of brahman, *the guru* (the teacher) and their personal initiation of their *shisya* (students), drawing a direct line of gurus and shishyas back to the progenitor/founding guru (who may be called the *Pravartaka acharya* or ***Maharishi*** and is often later deified as a personification of the deity or that particular idea of brahman), and ideally their own *matha (*institute/school of learning in a specific geographic location).

The guru-shishya parampara mechanism incorporates and attempts to solve issues around:

a) the original conception of oral learning and teaching under the *Shiksha Vedanga*

b) the issue of *pramana/yukti* (epistemology/means of knowledge/evidence), in which *sabda-pramana (*knowledge by means of reliable testimony) was frequently debated, and eventually accepted as a vital pramana in the Vedanta, Mimamsa, Nyaya, and Sankya darshanas, as well as more generally the issue of *Pratyaksa (*knowledge by perception/senses*),*which is accepted by every darshana

c) The issue of linguistic, theistic and ideological fidelity over time

d) the issue of reliable storage of knowledge over time, in writing and oral memory

e) various cultural beliefs, social and royal services and right/duty hierarchies

f) at some as yet undetermined point in history, applied in different ways by different traditions– caste

Listed below are the major and well-attested religio-cultural sampradayas drawing lineage from the Indian subcontinent.

Vaishnavism

Vaishnavism is centered around the worship of Vishnu. The name vishnu appears in the vedas, but his life, legends and lore were expanded upon mostly in later texts. Eventually, the story of Vishnu included a unique and fundamental cultural and religious concept of “avataram”, anglicized as “*Avatars*”, which means the earthly or divine forms or incarnations of a supreme god, almost always created by the god with a specific purpose or role to fulfill. It is through this framework that vaishnavism adopted (and arguably, co-opted) even figures such as the Buddha into the theological and cultural framework of vaishnavite hinduism.

A number of sects of vaishnavism, especially the Krishnaist sects, show a totalizing proselytizing deist/monotheist tendency unique (though ultimately, logically inevitable) to the Hindu context, that parallels many of the attitudes, aesthetic ambitions, psychological drives and second-order effects of revelatory abrahamic religion and its marriage to political and cultural power throughout European history.

However, even in the cases of sects like these, in practice, the tolerant monist aspects of vaishnavism’s *astika*/orthodox lineage and its close contact with relatively socially reformative *nastika* lineages usually come out more strongly than the monotheist ones– it is not typically iconoclast regarding the rest of the pantheon. Even certain sects at their most aggressive points always attempt to absorb deities instead of refuting their existence, both out of religious fear as well as strategic demographic thinking.

- **Progenitor** (1000BCE - 300BCE)
    - ***Bhagavatism*** (geographically-constrained worship of demigod heroes: Vasudeva, Balakrishna, Gopalakrishna)
    - ***Pancharatra***, associated with Narayana (Worship: Vishnu)
    - ***Vaikhanasa***, associated with Rishi Vaikhanasa (Worship: Vishnu)
- **Sri Sampradaya** (12th Century AD)
    - Vishnu + Lakshmi as deities with Lakshmi/feminine aspect taking the active role, Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism), Rishi Nathamuni (10th century) and Sri Ramanujacharya (12th Century)
        - Sects
            - Ethnoreligous group: *Iyengar Brahmins*
                - Vadakalai, northern indian lineage though variously settled, vedic-derived, orthodox, sanskrit as liturgical or source language, pro-caste
                    - Ahobila Matha, Munitryam, Parakala Matha
                - Thenkalai, south indian, prabhandam-forward, tamil as parallel important language, contextually anti-caste
                    - Telugu Sri Vaishnava, Soliyar, Kandadais, Sikkiliyar
- ***Brahma Sampradaya*** (13th Century AD)
    - Sadh Vaishnavism, proponent: Madhavacharya, Dvaita (dualist), Worships Vishnu and Lakshmi
    - Gaudiya Vaishnavism, founder/associated with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu + Nityananda, Achintya Bheda Abheda (dual and non-dual synthesis/negation), worships Krishna and Radha

        - Claimed lineage: → Vyasatirtha (1469) → Lakshmipati Tirtha → Madhavendra Puri → Isvara Puri → Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
        - Sects
            - **ISKCON (1966 AD)**
                - Stated lineage: Nimaichand Goswami → Gaurakisora Dasa Babaji → Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati → A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami (founder of ISKCON)
            - Gaudiya Math/Gaudiya Mission
            - Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti
            - Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Matha
            - Sri Sri Radha Govindaji Trust
            - Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana
    - Mahanam Vaishnavism (1891-current)
        - Prabhu Jagadbandhu + Sripad Mahendraji,
        - Stated Lineage: unknown guru → Prabhu Jagathbandhu → Mahanambrata Brahmachariji → Srimat Nabanibandhu (Bangladesh) + Srimat Upasakbandhu (India) → Srimat Kantibandhu Brahmachari (Bangaldesh)
- **Rudra Sampradaya** (15th Century AD)
- **Nimbarka Sampradaya**
- Sant Sampradayas
- Niche and Novel Denominations
    - *Ekasarana Dharma*
- Works and texts held in high regard by all sampradayas

Shaivism

Shaktism

Smartism

Yoga

Bhakti Movement

Buddhism

Jainism

Sikhism

Arya Samaj

Tantra

Syncretic Indic Religion

Neo-hinduism / Modern Hinduism / Popular Divisions

Indic-influenced Religion