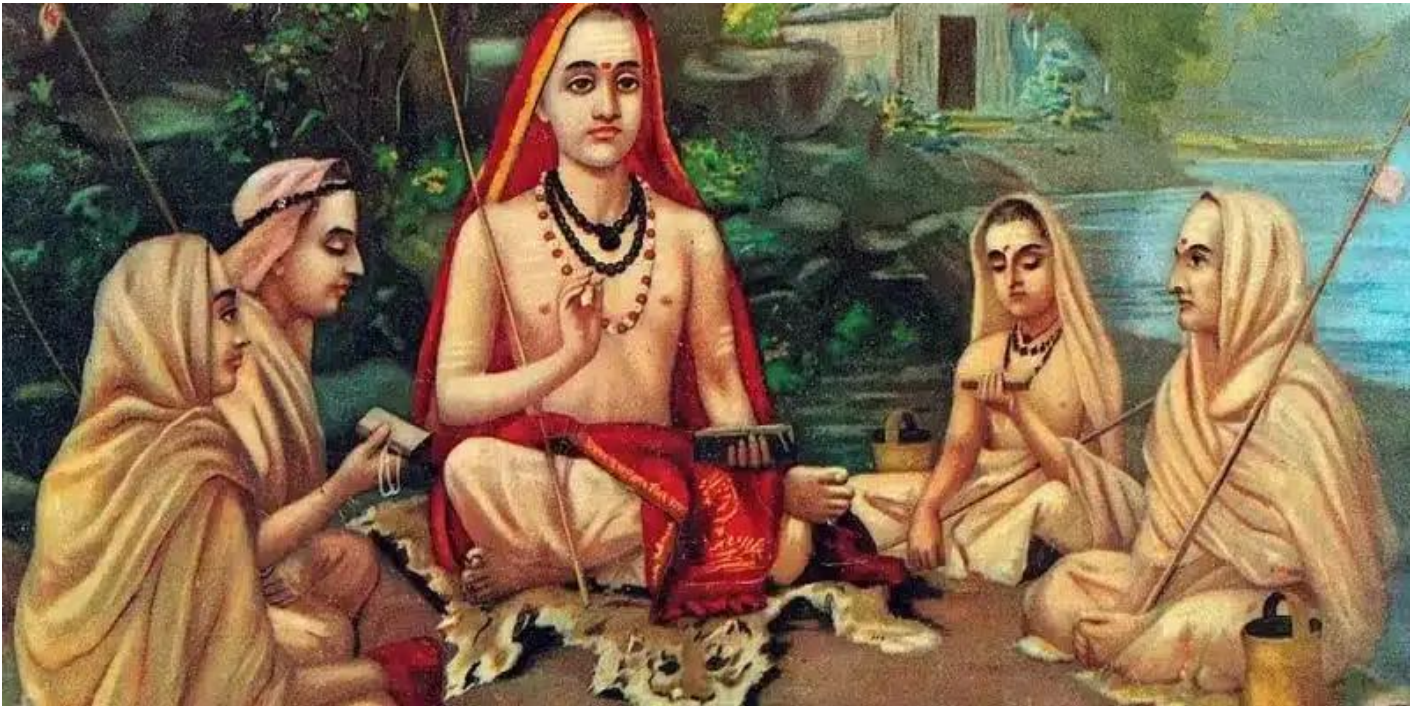


Who are Shankaracharyas?

January 18, 2024 • vajiramandravi.com



About Shankaracharyas

- Shankaracharya, literally ‘teacher of the way of Shankara’, is a religious title used by the heads of the four Hindu maths (monasteries) that were established by the eighth-century Hindu saint Adi Shankara.
- Adi Shankara established these maths to impart knowledge. These maths consist of religious shrines, temples, libraries, and residences.
- These maths are located in Dwarka (Gujarat), Joshimath (Uttarakhand), Puri (Odisha), and Sringeri (Karnataka).
 - Each math, called peetha or pitha in Sanskrit, was tasked with serving as the custodian of one Veda each and keeping alive Vedic literature.
 - Govardhan Math in Puri is the custodian of the Rig Veda, while the Dwarka Sharada Peetham in Gujarat is responsible for the Sam Veda.
 - The Sringeri Sharada Peetham in Karnataka is responsible for the Yajur Veda, and Jyotir Math in Uttarakhand’s Joshimath for the Atharva Veda.
 - Vijayanagara kingdom was the first to patronise the Sringeri math in the 14th century CE.
- The Shankaracharyas also oversee the Dashanami Sampradaya, an order of renunciates (those who have renounced the secular way of life).

Who was Adi Shankaracharya?

- Adi Shankaracharya, or Shankara, as he was known, was an ancient Indian philosopher and theologian who lived in the early 8th century CE.
 - Birth: He was born in Kalady, a village in present-day Kerala.
 - Revered as an avatar of Lord Shiva, it is believed that he mastered the Vedas when he was just 16.
 - Philosophical Contributions:
 - At a very young age, Shankara started criss-crossing the length and breadth of India to spread his commentaries on the Brahama Sutras, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita amid a rise in Jainism and Buddhism.
 - He is best known for his role in the development and propagation of Advaita Vedanta, a non-dualistic school of Hindu philosophy.
 - The fundamental philosophy of Advaita Vedanta lies in the unity of atma (soul), or individual consciousness, and brahma or the ultimate reality.
 - According to this philosophy of non-duality, God and humans are not two and the material world is an “illusion”.
 - His most important work is his efforts to synthesize the six sub-sects, known as ‘Shanmata.’ ‘Shanmata’, which literally translates to ‘six religions,’ is the worship of six supreme deities.
 - He also founded ‘Dashanami Sampradaya,’ which talks about leading a monastic life.
 - While Shankaracharya was a firm believer in ancient Hinduism, he condemned the ‘Mimamsa school of Hinduism’, which was purely based on ritual practices.
 - Four Mathas: He established four prominent monastic centers in India, each associated with one of the cardinal directions: Sringeri in the south, Dwarka in the west, Puri in the east, and Badrinath in the north.
 - Death: Adi Shankaracharya is believed to have attained Samadhi (a state of deep meditation or realization) at the young age of 32 in Kedarnath in the Himalayas.
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Q1) What are Upanishads?

The Upanishads are ancient texts from India that were composed orally in Sanskrit between about 700 B.C.E. and 300 B.C.E. There are thirteen major Upanishads, many of which were likely composed by multiple authors and are comprised of a variety of styles. As part of a larger group of texts, known as the Vedas, the Upanishads were composed in a ritual context, yet they mark the beginning of a reasoned enquiry into a number of perennial philosophical questions concerning the nature of being, the nature of the self, the foundation of life, what happens to the self at the time of death, the good life, and ways of interacting with others.

Source: [Who are the shankaracharyas — and who was Adi Shankara?](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/shankaracharyas/>

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