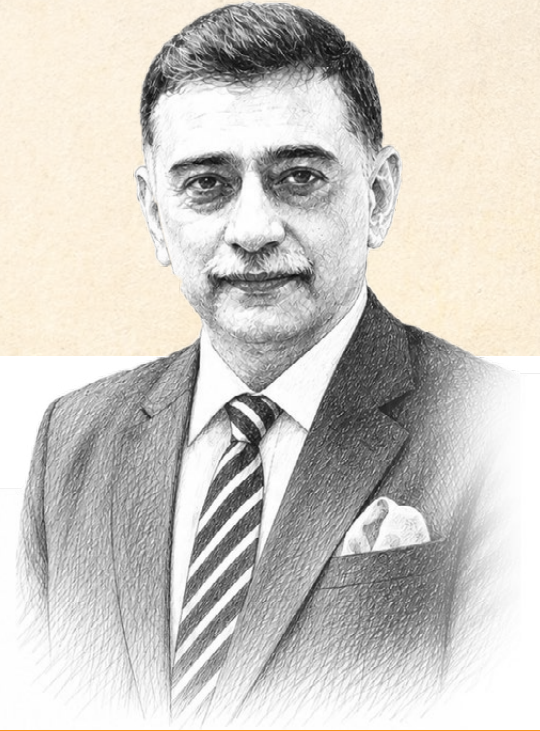






Message From the Director's Desk

"Looking ahead to July 2026, we have curated an equally robust and diverse schedule designed to discuss modern frameworks using timeless civilisational truths."

It is with immense pride and conviction that I welcome you to Bharat Ki Soch (BKS). Our mission is to delve into ancient Indian wisdom to address contemporary issues, driven by our vision: "Reimagining Bharat's civilisational wisdom for a resilient and progressive nation." We believe that the foundational knowledge accumulated over millennia is not an exercise in nostalgia but the ideal course for charting the country's path towards a Viksit Bharat. During the month of June 2026, we continued this mission relentlessly.

Our June calendar was highlighted by a significant two-day session under our flagship Mantraṇā Series held from June 18–19. This event brought together an extraordinary group of scholars to map the intersections of ancient Indian heritage, science and the arts. On the first day, Dr. Anita Bharat Shah opened with an enlightening exploration of Indian Art: Yajna as the Inspiration, followed by Dr. Rangarathnam Gopu, who charted the profound achievements of ancient Indian astronomers. Dr. Chitra Madhavan concluded the afternoon sessions with a historical dive into the Vijayanagara Empire, which was among the largest in medieval Asia. The second day carried this intellectual momentum forward, featuring Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvam on the Beauty Aesthetic and Divinity in Indian Bronzes, alongside Gowri Naren's expansive study on the Architectural Marvels of India, spanning temples, mandapas, step wells and palaces. We concluded the proceedings with Arjun Bharadwaj, who analysed the profound symbiosis and syncretism present within our classical literature and arts.

Looking ahead to July 2026, we have curated an equally robust and diverse schedule designed to discuss modern frameworks using timeless civilisational truths. We will start our monthly deliberations on July 1 discussing labour welfare, followed by July 16 with a highly anticipated seminar on Well-Being & Human Resilience, focusing on "Lessons from Ancient Wisdom and their relevance today". This will be followed on July 17 at the same venue by a special instalment of our Śāstra se Samvād tak series. For this session, former IMF Economist and best-selling author Shri Sriram Balasubramanian will join us to unpack his latest work, Dharmanomics: An Indigenous and Sustainable Economic Model. Finally, on July 23, we will gather at Seminar Hall 1-3, Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre, New Delhi, for a high-level Mantraṇā Series session on Climate Change and Sustainability. This crucial dialogue will be led by Amb. Shyam Saran, President of the India International Centre and Former Foreign Secretary of India, as we deliberate on ecological balance through a civilisational lens.

I invite you to engage deeply with Bharat Ki Soch. Together, we will carry the vision of Viksit Bharat forward - a nation that is prosperous, inclusive, grounded in its civilisational heritage and resilient in the face of global uncertainties. With unflinching resolve and unstinted effort, this joint earnest endeavour shall lead us to our goal. Bharat ki Soch presents the June 2026 issue of Soch Sutra, which highlights our collective journey and activities during the month.

RK Pachnanda
Director, Bharat Ki Soch

Indian Art and Architecture



18-19 June 2026



The **Mantraṇā Series**, a flagship initiative of Bharat Ki Soch, serves as a premier platform for revitalising India's profound civilisational heritage to address contemporary intellectual and societal challenges. This specific roundtable discussion was thematic in its scope, woven around the symbiotic relationship between classical arts, indigenous sciences and historical governance. Rather than viewing these domains in isolation, the discussion was framed to explore how ancient Indian aesthetics, ranging from the sacred geometry of temple architecture to the divine craftsmanship of classical bronzes, served as a reflection of deeper cosmic and scientific understandings, such as the landmark achievements of early Indian astronomers. By synthesising history, literature and science, the thematic introduction underscored that India's past is a living template for creative resilience, offering vital frameworks for a culturally grounded and progressive future.



The Living Bridge: Text, Stone and Spatio-Temporal Unity in Indian Aesthetics

Shri Arjun Bhardwaj



The rich tapestry of India's temple architecture cannot be understood through structural or iconographic manuals alone. While foundational treatises like the Shilpashastras and Agamas provide essential guidelines, classical Indian master builders did not merely reproduce mechanical instructions. Instead, a deep, spatio-temporal unity links Indian literature with the visual arts. Across diverse dynasties, timelines and regional idioms, textual narratives and the plastic arts have mutually nourished one another, translating the shared metaphysical abstractions of the civilization into breathing, static form.

Subverting the Wrathful: The Badami Chalukyas

The cave temples of Badami brilliantly reflect this fluid dialogue between text and chisel. In the famous Vishnu cave, a standing sculpture of Narasimha departs radically from the standard iconography of an enraged deity tearing apart the demon Hiranyakasipu. Here, the deity stands in a graceful, deflected stance, wearing a serene smile: incarnating Prasanna Narasimha.

This unconventional image finds its thematic echo in later literary compilations like the Subhashitaratna-bhandagara, which describes the ayudha-garva-bhanga or the shattering of the weapons' pride. In the narrative, Vishnu's personified weapons falsely believe that the preservation

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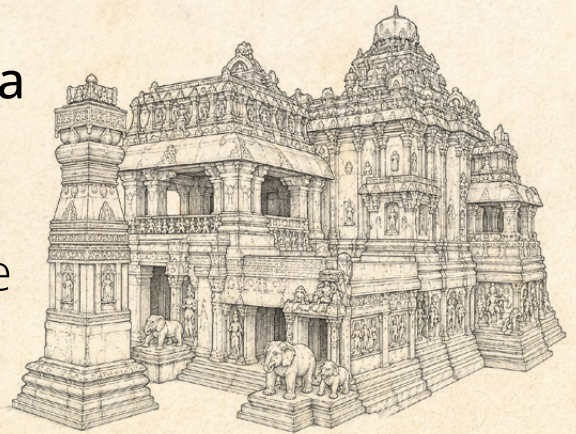
Roundtable Discussion on Indian Art and Architecture

“ Across timelines, across dynasties and across regions, India displays a remarkable artistic and philosophical unity. The forms may differ, but the underlying vision remains deeply connected. ”

Arjun Bhardwaj
Editor, Prekshaa

of dharma relies on their objective strength. Narasimha bypasses them entirely, destroying the demon with nothing but his claws. The knowing smile sculpted into the basalt rock captures the essence of the philosophical maxim that success stems from internal spiritual essence, not external instruments.

At the monolithic Kailashanatha temple in Ellora, the Indian genius for capturing complex narrative dimensions comes alive in the depiction of Shiva and Parvati playing a game of dice.



Materializing the Cosmic: From Ellora to Mamallapuram

This intellectual sophistication extends to how craftsmen interacted with their raw material. In Badami's Bhuvārāha-murti, the sculptor brilliantly utilized the natural striations of the living rock to depict the churning deluge from which the earth is rescued. By placing Bhudevi near Varāha's snout, the artist synthesized a unique sensory-theological truth: Earth is fundamentally defined by fragrance and the divine boar locates her through scent.

At the monolithic Kailashanatha temple in Ellora, the Indian genius for capturing complex narrative dimensions comes alive in the depiction of Shiva and Parvati playing a game of dice. Far from a simple domestic pastime, the scene functions as a profound allegory for cosmic time, mirror-imaging the verses of Bhartrihari's Vairagyashataka. The gaming board represents the universe, the day and night are the dice and human beings are the pawns shifted across lifetimes. Directly below this scene, the sculptors managed the rare feat of infusing stone with genuine humor: the mischievous Shivaganas are seen pulling, biting

and teasing Nandi the bull after Shiva gambles him away, a vivid crystallization of verses preserved in the northern Sadukti karnamrita.

The Sacred and the Mundane

Furthermore, Indian art never severed the sacred from the ordinary. The Pallava-era Govardhana panel at Mahabalipuram portrays Krishna lifting the mountain, yet the vast majority of the relief is dedicated to a naturalistic rendering of pastoral life: cowherds milking cattle, mothers tending to calves and citizens going about their work. It emphasizes that under divine protection, the rhythms of everyday life persist uninterrupted.

Ultimately, whether tracing Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava on the walls of the Brihadiśvara temple or analyzing the raw, unrefined bhakti of Kannappa Nayanar at Darasuram, Indian art reveals an unfragmented worldview. Dynasties changed and regional styles fluctuated, but the underlying civilisational continuum remained unbroken, preserving a shared cultural imagination across text, space and time.

The Shield of the South:

Reassessing the Historical and Cultural Legacy of the Vijayanagara Empire

Dr. Chithra Madhavan



The medieval Vijayanagara Empire was one of the largest empire in Asia during its height in the sixteenth century, yet it remains largely marginalized or omitted in standard Indian history syllabi. While textbooks extensively detail northern dynasties, the illustrious reign of Emperor Krishnadevaraya, which coincided with Babur's entry into India, is frequently reduced to passing references. This lack of representation obscures a pivotal historical epoch that fundamentally altered the cultural and political map of Southern India.

Historical Crisis and the Rise of the Empire

The empire emerged from a profound geopolitical crisis in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Following the collapse of the Chola Empire, a succession struggle within the Pandya kingdom led to the devastating 1310–1311 lightning raid by Alauddin Khalji's general, Malik Kafur, who plundered the temple treasures of the south. This was followed by more permanent, oppressive Tughlaq invasions that left the region socially and economically fractured.

Witnessing this widespread ruin, the seer Swami Vidyaranya of the Shringeri Sharada Peetham catalyzed a resistance. He mentored two brothers, Harihara and Bukka (Hakka and Bukka), who had been captured by the Tughlaqs and forcibly converted to Islam. Under Vidyaranya's guidance, they returned to their roots and founded Vijayanagara, the "city of victory," on the banks of the Tungabhadra river in 1336.

Ideology of Protection and Purva Maryada

Central to the Vijayanagara ethos was the concept of protection, immortalized in their dynastic emblem featuring Varaha (the boar incarnation of Vishnu) alongside the sun and the moon. Mirroring Varaha's rescue of Bhumadevi, the

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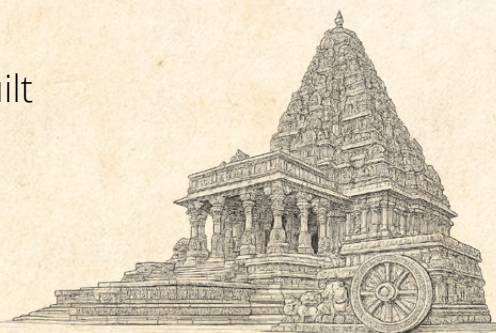
“ Everything we continue to cherish today – our temples, inscriptions, sculptures, music and dance traditions – survived because the Vijayanagara Empire not only built and expanded, but also protected. Their commitment to Purva Maryada, respect for earlier traditions and dynasties, is reflected in both their architecture and their civilizational vision. ”

Dr. Chithra Madhavan
Distinguished Historian and Heritage Scholar
specialising in South Indian Temples

rulers vowed to defend South India from northern invasions for as long as the celestial bodies endured (Surya Chandra Paryantam).

Crucially, their governance was anchored in Purva Maryada – a profound reverence for preexisting traditions. Rather than destroying or replacing the heritage of the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas or Hoysalas, the Vijayanagara rulers preserved and expanded upon it. This is evidenced by their copper-plate inscriptions written in Sanskrit using the Nandinagari script, which seamlessly integrated regional scripts like Kannada for sacred sign-offs.

When the empire expanded into Tamil Nadu from 1370 onwards, Purva Maryada dictated their architectural interventions. They rarely built entirely new temples, choosing instead to fortify and augment existing shrines. At Mamallapuram, they constructed a protective multi-pillared mandapa directly in front of the seventh-century Pallava Krishna Govardhana rock relief.



Sacred Geography and Architectural Marvels of Hampi

The capital city, mapped onto the ancient landscape of Hampi, was built amidst a defensive terrain of rivers and hills identified with Kishkindha from the Ramayana. The city grew into a thriving cosmopolitan hub and international market, praised by foreign envoys like Persia's Abdur Razzaq.

Architecturally, the empire left behind extraordinary monuments:

-  The Virupaksha Temple: An ancient sacred core that the empire systematically expanded, featuring mandapa ceilings painted with depictions of Swami Vidyaranya.
-  The Vitthala Temple: Commissioned by Devaraya II, this complex houses the famous stone chariot (a shrine dedicated to Garuda) and iconic musical pillars.
-  The Hazara Rama Temple: Originally named Ramachandra, its inner walls display an intricate, highly sensitive sculptural narration of the Valmiki Ramayana, capturing dramatic episodes with immense creative precision, while its outer walls depict secular processions and trade with the Portuguese.
-  The Krishna Temple: Built by Krishnadevaraya to consecrate a Krishna idol won during his successful Udayagiri campaign against the Gajapati rulers of Odisha.

Architectural Footprint in Tamil Nadu

When the empire expanded into Tamil Nadu from 1370 onwards, Purva Maryada dictated their architectural interventions. They rarely built entirely new temples, choosing instead to fortify and

augment existing shrines. At Mamallapuram, they constructed a protective multi-pillared mandapa directly in front of the seventh-century Pallava Krishna Govardhana rock relief. To maintain structural and artistic harmony, the architects blended signature Vijayanagara elements - such as Pushpa Bodhigai (plantain flower) brackets - with traditional Pallava-style lion bases on the pillars. Similar respectful augmentations and complex narrative carvings are found at the Sthala Shayana Perumal temple and the coastal Nithya Kalyanaswamy temple in Thiruvidadai.

The Fall and Enduring Legacy

The golden age of the capital abruptly ended in 1565 at the Battle of Talikota, where a coalition of four Deccan Sultanates defeated the Vijayanagara forces under the de facto rule of Ramaraya. The victorious armies systematically plundered, torched and ruined Hampi over a prolonged period, leaving its grand brick-and-mortar gopurams charred and its principal idols defaced or displaced.

Despite this catastrophic political collapse, the true legacy of the Vijayanagara dynasty remains foundational. By serving as a defensive shield for over two centuries, the empire successfully insulated southern India's classical music, dance, architecture, literature and foundational traditions from erasure, ensuring their survival into the modern era.

Beyond the Eye: Structural Physics and Sacred Aesthetics in Indian Temple Architecture



Smt. Gowri Naren

When we visit an ancient Indian temple, we see exactly what we have been trained to observe. A devotee focuses on the inner sanctum, hoping for a deep spiritual connection; a historian searches for dates and dynastic timelines; an art lover analyzes the intricate iconography of the sculptures. Yet, an architect looking at these spaces wonders about something entirely different: how did ancient master builders conceptually design these spaces and how did they manage the immense physical forces to pull these structures off?

Hidden within the traditional idiom of temple construction lies an extraordinary repository of original, ingenious architectural ideas. Far from being mere decorations, these innovations solved complex engineering puzzles while simultaneously orchestrating the human experience, transforming heavy stone loads into profound spiritual encounters. By peering beyond surface classification, we can unpack four brilliant engineering concepts that elevated temple building from basic construction to a monumental science.

Bhuvaneshwaris: Dissolving Structural Heaviness Through the Cosmos

The Bhuvaneshwari is a deeply recessed, highly ornate inverted dome ceiling that represents the absolute zenith of Hoysala stone carving. Globally, architectural traditions developed the true radial dome out of a congregational need to create massive, column-free spaces by converting a square base into a circle using internal structural devices called squinches or pendentives. However, the Hoysalas had no such requirement. Their

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“The greatest architectural ideas in Indian temples are not merely structural solutions. They transfer weight, shape space, guide movement and transform the visitor's experience, all at the same time.”

Gowri Naren
Indian Scholar associated with Tamil Heritage Trust

front assembly halls or navarangas, were already densely filled with heavy, lathe-turned stone pillars made of soapstone - a soft material that necessitated frequent structural supports.

Instead of removing columns, the Hoysalas positioned the Bhuvaneshwari directly overhead between the four central pillars where a devotee stands to pray. Structurally, these are stepped, corbelled domes rather than true radial domes. The square frame transitions into an octagonal and then a circular ring system, stepping inward until it terminates at a central, dangling stone pendant.

In the eastern region of Odisha, Kalinga architecture took a monumental leap away from traditional straight-lined, pyramidal roofs by introducing the Rekha Deula - the iconic curvilinear sanctum tower.



The structural mastery lies in their micro-chisel technique. Once the heavy corbelled blocks were securely in place, sculptors meticulously chiseled into the stone mass from underneath. This required a profound understanding of physics, as the builders had to judge exactly how much stone could be removed without triggering a collapse. Visually and emotionally, this delicate stone canopy dissolves the oppressive weight of a low ceiling, expanding the space upward and wrapping the viewer in an orderly, rotating cosmic matrix.

Sandharams: Managing Massive Gravity Loads Through Internal Movement

While the Bhuvaneshwari remained largely localized to Western and Jain architectures, the Sandhara concept is an engineering principle deployed across the length and breadth of India. Structurally, a Sandhara temple is defined by having a covered, internal circumambulatory path (pradakshina patha) enclosing the central sanctum sanctorum (garbhagriha).

The primary religious objective was to keep the sacred walk shielded from outside weather and sensory distractions. However, the resulting architectural byproduct was a masterclass in structural engineering. By building a covered corridor around the core, the architect effectively introduced a second, thick outer wall system parallel to the inner sanctum.

This double-wall layout provided a brilliant solution for distributing gravity loads. The massive weight and shifting lateral thrusts of the soaring stone tower (shikhara or vimana) no longer had to press entirely down onto a single, vulnerable inner wall. Instead, the load path split: part of the vertical pressure travelled down the inner core, while the outward lateral forces were safely transferred across the corridor's ceiling to the heavy exterior wall. The stone roof slabs over the corridor acted as a horizontal diaphragm, tightly binding the two walls together. Whether experienced as a dark, womb-like meditative walkway in Tanjore's Brihadeeshwara or an airy, balcony-lit corridor in Khajuraho's Kandariya Mahadeva, the Sandhara configuration successfully balanced massive weight with fluid human transit.

Rekha Deulas: The Illusion of Ascent via Curvilinear Physics

In the eastern region of Odisha, Kalinga architecture took a monumental leap away from traditional straight-lined, pyramidal roofs by introducing the Rekha Deula - the iconic curvilinear sanctum tower. The genius of the Rekha Deula rests on a careful combination of structural mechanics and visual geometry.

The curve of the tower does not bend gradually from its base. For nearly the lower third of its main body (gandi), the tower rises almost entirely straight and vertical before

gently and then abruptly, curving inward near the peak. This precise geometric profile alters human perception. Because the eye is forced to trace a straight vertical line before the curve takes over, the mind registers the tower as being significantly taller than its physical dimensions. Deep vertical wall projections or rathas, segment the stone face, creating dramatic ripples of light and shadow that make the heavy stone look dynamic and fluid.

From an engineering perspective, this inward curve behaves as a massive, self-stabilizing stone dome. Odishan temples were built using gravity, balance and interlocking dry stone slabs without any mortar or radial arches. If the walls were straight, the heavy upper ceiling blocks would push outward and jeopardize the structure. The inwardly curving walls counteract this by channeling forces into compression. At the absolute summit sits the massive, ribbed amalaka stone block, which acts like a structural keystone, pushing down with immense weight to lock the entire dry-stone assembly safely into place.

Urushringas: Building Mountains via Fractal Buttresses

Perfected within the Shekhari sub-style of North Indian architecture, the Urushringa shikhara represents the absolute pinnacle of ancient scale magnification. An Urushringa is a miniature subsidiary tower or minor spire that springs directly out from the sides of the main central tower.

A standard Latina temple relies on a single, smooth four-sided spire, which severely limits how high a temple can go because building taller requires making the core walls thicker, heavily eating into the internal floor space. The Urushringa architecture completely bypassed this limitation by clustering scaled-down replicas of the main tower around the central core in a cascading, staggered fashion.

Aesthetically, this creates a fractal surface where large forms repeat themselves at smaller scales, mimicking organic structures found in nature like pinecones or mountain ranges. This layout leverages two optical techniques: forced perspective and vertical foreshortening. When looking up from the base, the mind reads these miniature towers as complete, full-sized spires, which accelerates the eye's upward movement and creates an illusion of endless vertical height.

Yet, the primary function of the Urushringa is hidden structural physics. The massive stone slabs of the main tower inherently generate a powerful outward, lateral thrust that threatens to push the walls apart. The attached Urushringas lean their dead weight inward against the core, functioning exactly like the masonry buttresses found in Western Gothic cathedrals. They redirect the dangerous outward lateral pressures safely down through the foundations, enabling ancient architects to build towers that were simultaneously taller, lighter and structurally superior.

Training the Mind to See

Ultimately, the architectural history of Indian temples proves that the human eye only captures what the mind knows to look for. These monumental stone structures are far more than historical relics or artistic repositories; they are sophisticated masterworks of engineering. By training our minds to see the hidden physics built directly into the sacred aesthetics, observing how a ceiling manages weight or how a tower alters perspective, we begin to truly appreciate the brilliant mind behind the ancient chisel.

The Metaphysical Blueprint: Yajna as the Soul of Indian Art



Dr. Anita Bharat Shah

For too long, the history of Indian classical art has been viewed through a fragmented lens, categorised merely as “religious” or “decorative” by conventional Western scholarship. The reality, however, is far more complex and intellectually profound. Ancient India never bifurcated the sacred from the scientific, nor did it divorce philosophy from the material arts. “In my recent research leading to The Evolution of Indian Classical Art, I have sought to trace this timeless, unified grammar, a framework that reveals how the ancient ritual philosophy of the Vedic Yajna served as the foundational blueprint for all classical Indian sculpture, architecture and painting.”

To understand the genesis of Indian form, we must look to the eras when worship was primarily aniconic. Before the advent of anthropomorphic idols, the spiritual center of the civilization was the sacred fire of the Yajna. A Yajna was not a simple propitiatory ritual; it was a highly sophisticated microcosm of the cosmos. As documented in the Shatapatha Brahmana, the construction of the fire altar or the Mahavedi, demanded an exacting command over mathematics and geometry. The layout, utilizing a precise number of bricks, directly simulated cyclic time, astronomical paths and the cosmic order (Rta).

This structural, mathematical and spiritual rigor did not disappear when the civilization transitioned toward Murti Puja (form worship).

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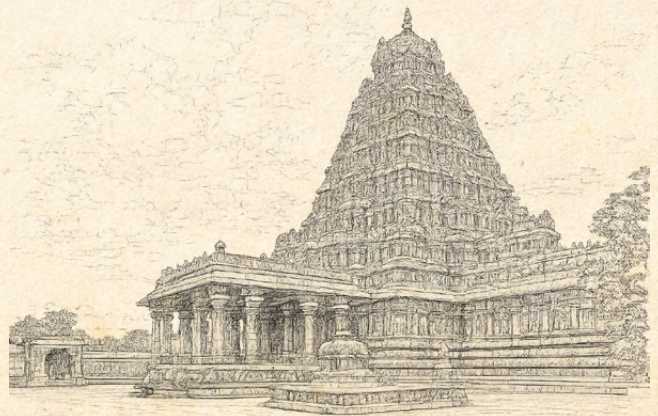
Roundtable Discussion on Indian Art and Architecture

“The true purpose of Indian classical art is not aesthetic alone. It is the purification of consciousness through rasa, participation in cosmic harmony, and ultimately a movement towards higher reality.”

Dr. Anita Bharat Shah
Author of 'Colours of Devotion'; Co-founder of Aashita Collection.

Instead, the sacred geometry of the Yagyakund became the literal bedrock of the Shilpa Shastras and the Natya Shastra. Texts like the Vastu Sutra Upanishad demonstrate a seamless continuity. When the rishis and master craftsmen meditated upon the divine to manifest form, they applied the exact same principles of cosmic proportion, measure and alignment.

This artistic process requires a complete dissolution of the ego, aligning perfectly with the Nishkama Karma of the Bhagavad Gita. The ancient master craftsmen deliberately chose anonymity.



In traditional Indian composition, every line is an expression of natural philosophy. The Agni Rekha (Fire Line) dictates the vertical axis, signifying an upward surge of spiritual energy. The horizontal axis represents the stability of water and earth, while dynamic diagonals represent the wind. These elemental lines intersect at a single, absolute point of cosmic origin, the Brahma Bindu or Marman. Whether one examines a Chola bronze or a classical temple relief, the underlying composition is structured around this energetic grid, designed to draw the viewer's eye toward the unmanifest center.

This artistic process requires a complete dissolution of the ego, aligning perfectly with the Nishkama Karma of the Bhagavad Gita. The ancient master craftsmen deliberately chose anonymity. They left their works unsigned because the creation was never about individual vanity; it was an act of pure Karma Yoga - a selfless offering to the divine. Once a sculpture was completed, the artist performed rituals to relinquish personal ownership, allowing the object to become a sacred vehicle for darshan, bridging the human and the transcendent.

Rescuing the Indigenous Timeline

We must confront the intellectual tragedy within our modern educational institutions. While reminiscing an interaction with art and architecture students, the panelist mentioned

that she was deeply saddened to find that while they were thoroughly well-versed in Western concepts like the Fibonacci sequence and the Golden Ratio, they had almost no exposure to India's own indigenous aesthetic theories. They did not know that centuries before Europe formulated these mathematical successions, ancient Indian thinkers like Pingala (2nd century BCE) and Baudhayana had already systematized these exact geometric laws to facilitate the construction of Vedic altars.

Furthermore, our historical consciousness remains distorted by a colonial timeline that overlooks our greatest artistic milestones while muting our civilisational traumas. Consider the historical narrative surrounding Mathura. Long celebrated as the "cradle of Indian art," 2nd-century BCE Mathura witnessed a true aesthetic revolution where form worship crystallised, generating an artistic grammar that radiated across Sanchi and the entire subcontinent.

Reclaiming our history and re-establishing our indigenous framework is not an exercise in nostalgic romanticism. It is an urgent intellectual necessity. Indian classical art is not merely decorative; it is philosophical, mathematical and deeply experiential. By decoding its sacred geometry and understanding its roots in the Vedic Yajna, we shift our relationship with our heritage from passive aesthetic appreciation to an active, internal pathway of consciousness.

The Living Stone: Dravida Temples as Mathematical Repositories



Shri Rangarathnam Gopu

For generations, the narrative surrounding India's architectural marvels has been viewed through a narrow, purely religious lens. Visitors and scholars alike walk through the towering gateways of Southern India, marveling at the scale but missing the underlying genius. The great Dravida temples of India are not merely places of worship; they are monumental stone textbooks, preserving the exact sciences, astronomical calculations and sophisticated structural engineering of our ancestors.

When we look at the structural anatomy of a Dravida temple - from the soaring Gopurams (gateway towers) to the central Vimana (the tower over the sanctum) - we are looking at an absolute mastery over material sciences and physics. Consider the sheer structural logistics of handling granite, one of the hardest stones known to humanity. The ancient Sthapatis (architects) did not just carve stone; they understood the distribution of weight, seismic resilience and the mathematics of interlocking joints without the use of mortar.

Every tier of a Vimana or Gopuram reduces in scale according to strict geometric progressions. This is not just visually pleasing; it is an engineering necessity that shifts the center of gravity downward, allowing these colossal structures to withstand centuries of weathering, environmental shifts and seismic activity. The mathematical precision required to calculate the load-bearing

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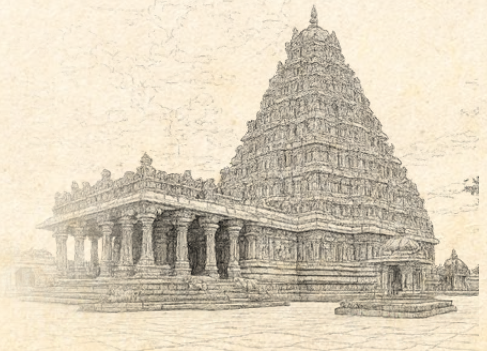
“ In the Indian knowledge tradition, astronomy was not merely the study of celestial objects; it was 'Kālavidhāna Shāstram' - the science of determining time. By observing the movements of the Sun, Moon, and stars, our ancestors developed sophisticated systems to understand cycles, seasons, and humanity's place in the cosmos. ”

Mr. Rangarathnam Gopu
Author & Co-founder of Varahamihira
Science Forum

capacity of these multi-tiered stone towers, long before the advent of modern computers, is a testament to an advanced indigenous scientific tradition.

Furthermore, these temples were built to align with the cosmos. The placement of the sanctum, the orientation of the main axis and the specific

The true tragedy of our modern educational and cultural landscape is the disconnect between our people and these architectural monuments. We have been conditioned to view our history through a colonial timeline that treats Indian science as rudimentary or borrowed.



angles of the windows and pillared halls were carefully calibrated using ancient astronomical calculations. On specific days of the year - such as the equinoxes or solstices - the rising sun penetrates deep into the dark, innermost sanctum to illuminate the deity. This requires a flawless understanding of the earth's rotation, axial tilt and solar paths, permanently etched into stone.

Preserving the Civilisational Narrative

The true tragedy of our modern educational and cultural landscape is the disconnect between our people and these architectural monuments. We have been conditioned to view our history through a colonial timeline that treats Indian science as rudimentary or borrowed. Yet, standing in the shadow of a thousand-year-old Dravida temple, one confronts an undeniable truth: India was home to a highly advanced, empirical civilization that synthesized the material and the spiritual.

Every pillar in a temple courtyard tells a story of mathematical symmetry. The musical pillars of Hampi or Madurai, which emit distinct musical notes when tapped, reveal an intricate understanding of acoustic engineering and metallurgy. The geometric layouts of the temple tanks (Kalyanis or Pushkarinis) demonstrate a mastery over hydraulic engineering and rainwater harvesting that sustained entire urban ecosystems during times of drought.

Preserving this architectural heritage is not merely a matter of physical conservation or tourism. It is an urgent requirement for our national narrative and civilisational identity. We must move beyond viewing these structures as passive relics of a bygone era. Instead, we must learn to read the stone, decode the mathematics of the Sthapatis and reclaim the Dravida temple as a proud symbol of India's timeless scientific intellect.

Indian Bronze Marvels: The True Philosophy of Temple Architecture



Dr. Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvan

When we step into the ancient temple towns of Kumbakonam, Kancheepuram or Thanjavur, we are not merely walking into historical relics; we are stepping into the living, beating heart of Indian knowledge tradition. For centuries, standard academic histories have struggled to define the true purpose of these structural marvels. They have relied heavily on external terms like “Devalayas” or translated them into static equivalents like “cathedrals.” But a temple in the Hindu tradition is entirely unique - it is a meticulous synthesis of cosmological site selection, rigorous geometry and profound philosophical intent.

The towering Vimanas and sprawling mandapams we see today are the physical manifestations of sovereign gratitude. When the great ruling kings of the past poured their immense wealth and resources into building one magnificent stone temple after another, it was never an exercise in imperial vanity or a display of private tyranny. The monarchs understood a fundamental law of Dharma: these structures were built as a profound expression of devotion to the Almighty and once completed, they were deliberately left entirely for public use. They were never retained as private royal assets; they were engineered as the social, economic and spiritual sanctuaries of the community.

This architectural brilliance relies on a meticulous command over structural engineering. From the transition of column orders from the Pallava to the

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“The actual purpose of Indian bronzes was never to sit behind glass in museums. They were created to participate in festivals, music, rituals, and community life. Their significance lies not only in preservation, but in their continued connection with living traditions.”

Dr. Madhusudhanan Kalaichelvam
Architect, Conservation Specialist, Scholar of Indian Culture and Founder, Arangam Studio

Chola eras, the evolving grammar of temple pillars reflects a deep understanding of load-bearing geometry, material durability and visual rhythm. Every stone was carved to tell a dual story: the explicit narrative of sacred lore and the implicit narrative of mathematical precision. Consider the legendary UNESCO World Heritage sites like the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram or the Chola

We can no longer afford to be passive inheritors of this colossal legacy. Today, many of our ancient architectural wonders are celebrated globally by international bodies, yet the responsibility of defining their true value lies with us.



temples of Thanjavur. They stand not just as aesthetic triumphs but as physical archives of iconography and architectural symbolism that continue to withstand the test of cyclic time.

Reclaiming the Pilgrimage: Reversing the Colonial Gaze

The modern intellectual tragedy is that we have allowed our sacred spaces to be reduced to mere objects of curiosity. The Western world looks at these profound journeys as "tourism" - a passive, commercial consumption of aesthetics. Within our civilisational consciousness, however, this act has always been a Pilgrimage. It is an active, internal process of seeking alignment with the cosmic order.

We can no longer afford to be passive inheritors of this colossal legacy. Today, many of our ancient architectural wonders are celebrated globally by international bodies, yet the responsibility of defining their true value lies with us. We are the ones best placed to declare their philosophical and structural worth to the world. It is an urgent national necessity that we begin systematically cataloging, studying and taking proactive ownership of these marvels.

By advancing spiritual tourism in a structured, holistic manner and by re-establishing our indigenous vocabulary, we do more than just preserve granite and sandstone. We revive our Atmabodha (self-awareness) and ensure that these monuments continue to radiate knowledge, devotion and civilisational pride for generations to come.

Social Media Campaigns



Marvels of India
THE SHRENI

Ancient Bharat's Marvel of Economic Organisation
Bharat's ancient guilds, known as Shreni, were sophisticated economic institutions of the pre-modern commercial world. Shrenis were the most vital institutions driving economic activity, functioning as legal entities composed of individuals engaged in similar trades, governed democratically through general assemblies and operating under the guiding principles of Shreni Dharma.

A Regulated, Standards-Driven Economy
They regulated manufacturing standards, trade, ethical codes, prices and the quality of crafts. Some of them became wealthy enough to act as custodians and bankers of religious and civic endowments. Kautilya's Arthashastra describes their regulation of trade, fixation of prices, supervision of weights and measures and even their judicial powers in commercial disputes, making them pivotal intermediaries between the state and the economy.

Pioneers of Corporate Banking
They also functioned as a bank, providing loans to its members. There is sufficient historical evidence to prove the existence of distinct Shreni banks owned and managed by the guild members.

A Sophisticated Multi-Functional Model
The research on Bharat's economic history shows that the Shreni model was not a primitive associative structure but an evolved institution providing specialised production, quality assurance, capital formation and social security, all underpinned by a profound ideology of corporate ethics.

सत्यं वद। धर्मं चर। स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः।
Taittiriya Upanishad

Speak the truth, walk the path of righteousness, and never be negligent in your learning.

Timeless Wisdom

प्रकृतिसम्पदा ह्यनायकम् अपि राज्यं नीयते चाणक्य सूत्राणि - 12

The sustenance and prosperity of a country depend on the wealth of a virtuous citizenry.

The Pioneer
NEW DELHI
MONDAY
15 MAY, 2026

DID YOU KNOW?

The princely state of Travancore, in present day Kerala, pioneered state sponsored education more than 200 years ago and laid the foundation for the region's high literacy rates today. In 1817, the visionary young queen, Rani Queen Parvathi Bayi, issued a historic royal receipt declaring that the state would bear the full cost of educating its people. The decree established education as a fundamental responsibility of the government and extended its benefits irrespective of caste or gender. Under this policy, the state-built schools, paid teachers directly from the royal treasury and actively encouraged the enrolment of girls. This bold and progressive model of governance, implemented decades before many Western nations embraced free public education, transformed Travancore into one of the most forward-looking states in the subcontinent and profoundly shaped human development in South India.

Timeless Wisdom

मन्त्रमूलाः सर्वात्मनाः ॥
चाणक्य सूत्राणि - 22

All undertakings (projects/actions) have their root in counsel (deliberation and planning).

BHARAT KI SOCH
MANTRANĀ

Roundtable Discussion on
Indian Art and Architecture

18 - 19 June
9:30 AM - 1:00 PM
NEW DELHI

Shiva: The Source

In Yogic tradition, Shiva is not just a deity
He is Adi-Yogi, the origin of Yoga itself

Kannadipaya
(The Mirror Mat)

A remarkable plaiting tradition of Kerala's tribal communities

The Pioneer
NEW DELHI
WEDNESDAY 17 JUN 2026

Fable with Moral
The Compassionate Elephant and Prince Meghakumar

Restraint and devotion form the bedrock of Jain teachings, acting as twin forces that purify the soul and dismantle karmic attachments. Through rigorous self-restraint and unwavering devotion, an individual gains the spiritual strength required to conquer earthly desires and achieve ultimate liberation. The following story reflects the same.

Lord Mahavira initiated Prince Meghakumar, but the harsh ascetic life soon overwhelmed the prince. Sensing his distress, Mahavira recounted Meghakumar's past life. In it, a noble elephant balanced on three legs for three days to save a rabbit, proving that profound compassion and values require discipline and sacrifice.

Long ago, during a raging forest fire, a majestic forest elephant managed to stand in a small, cleared safety patch. Around him, dozens of other desperate, terrified animals huddled together to escape the blazing inferno. As the weary elephant shifted his weight and raised a heavy foot to scratch an itch, a tiny, terrified rabbit quickly darted into the newly empty space beneath him.

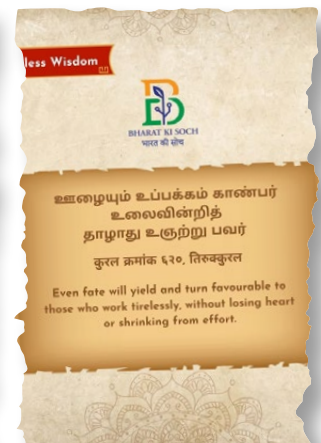
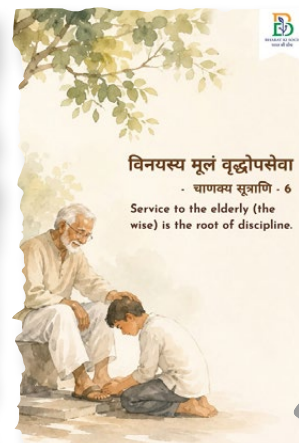
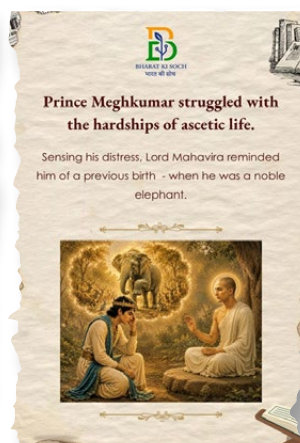
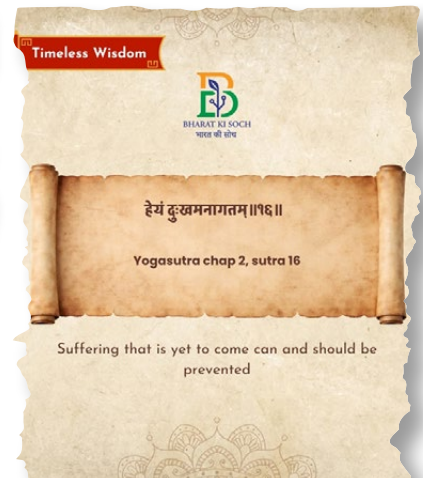
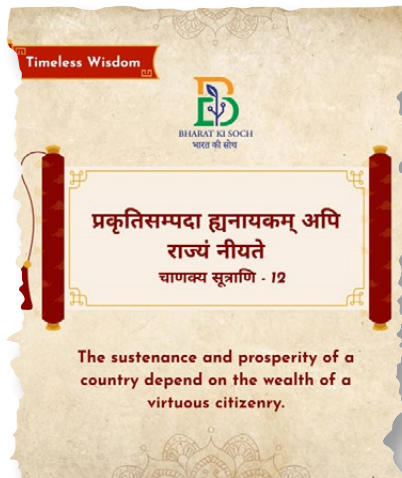
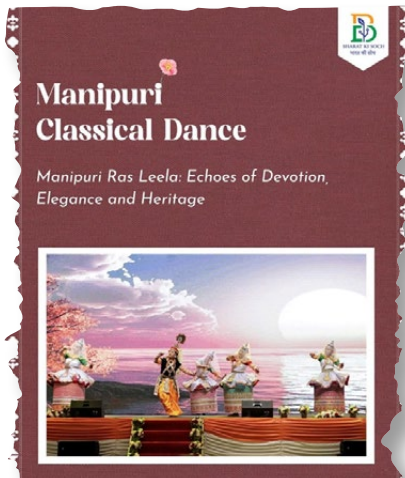
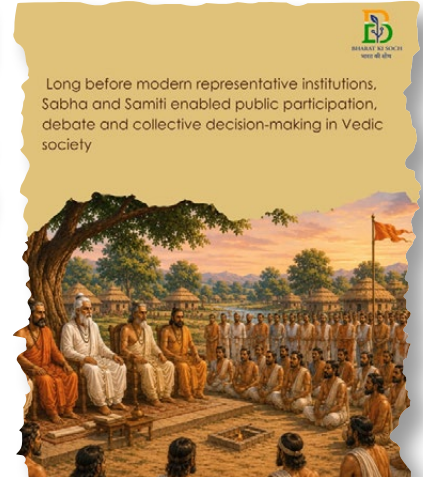
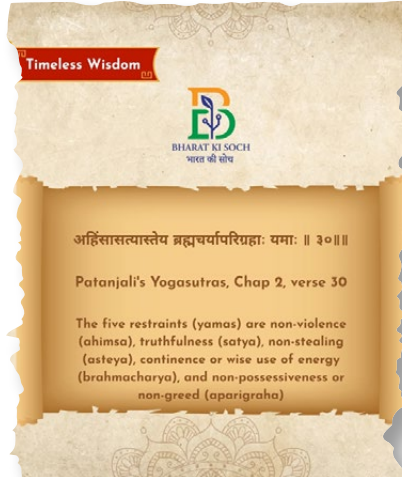
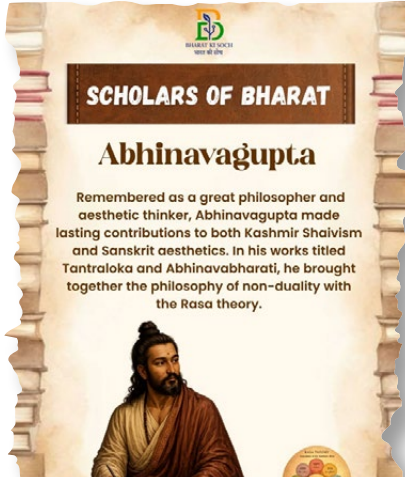
The elephant looked down and saw the fragile creature trembling right under his massive foot. Realizing that bringing his foot down would instantly crush the little rabbit, he made an extraordinary decision fueled by unconditional mercy. Choosing compassion

he maintained this impossible, agonizing posture for over three days and nights until the raging forest fire completely died down. The prolonged physical stress took a severe toll on his body, but his mind remained focused entirely on protecting the fragile life beneath him. When the smoke finally cleared and the elephant safely scurried away, the elephant's exhausted body gave out and he collapsed. Yet, this pure intent of selflessly saving a life elevated his soul, ultimately leading to his noble rebirth as Prince Meghakumar.

If a soul could endure such immense physical hardship out of pure kindness, when it was just a wild animal, human beings can certainly endure temporary discomforts and challenges to protect their spiritual path, and ethical values.

Moral of the Fable: Be compassionate.

Social Media Campaigns





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भारत की सोच

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