



राष्ट्रीयसंस्कृतविश्वविद्यालयः

National Sanskrit University :: Tirupati
(Central University)

A Central University established under an Act of Parliament

Online Certificate Programme in
Temple Culture and Temple Administration

Topic

M27 - Seven Cities of Moksha

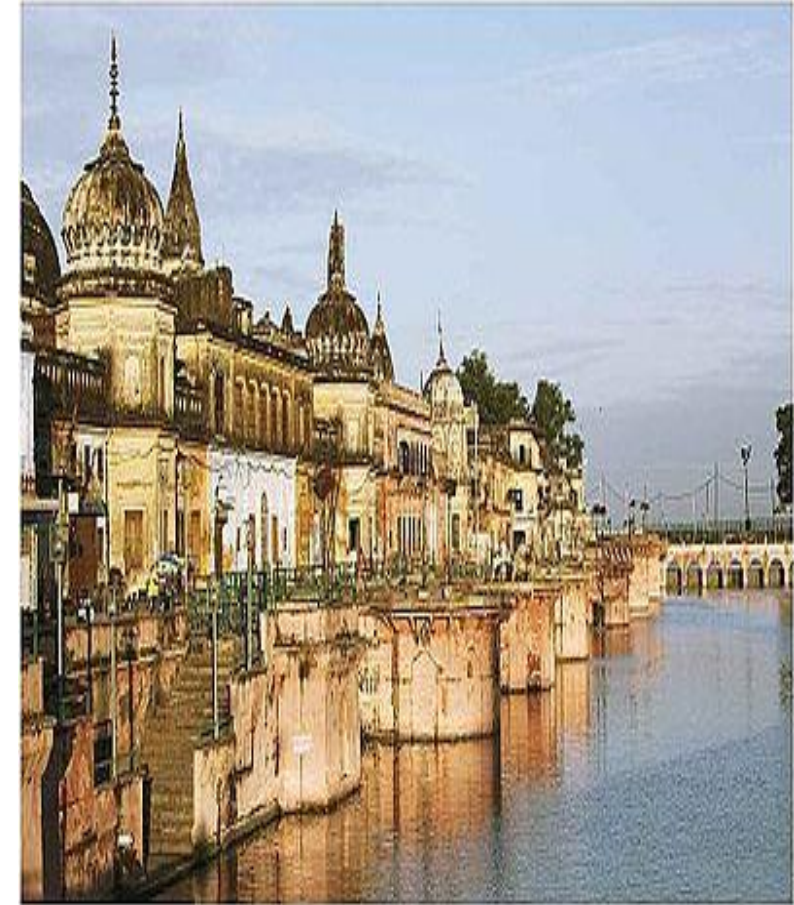
By

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Ayodhya

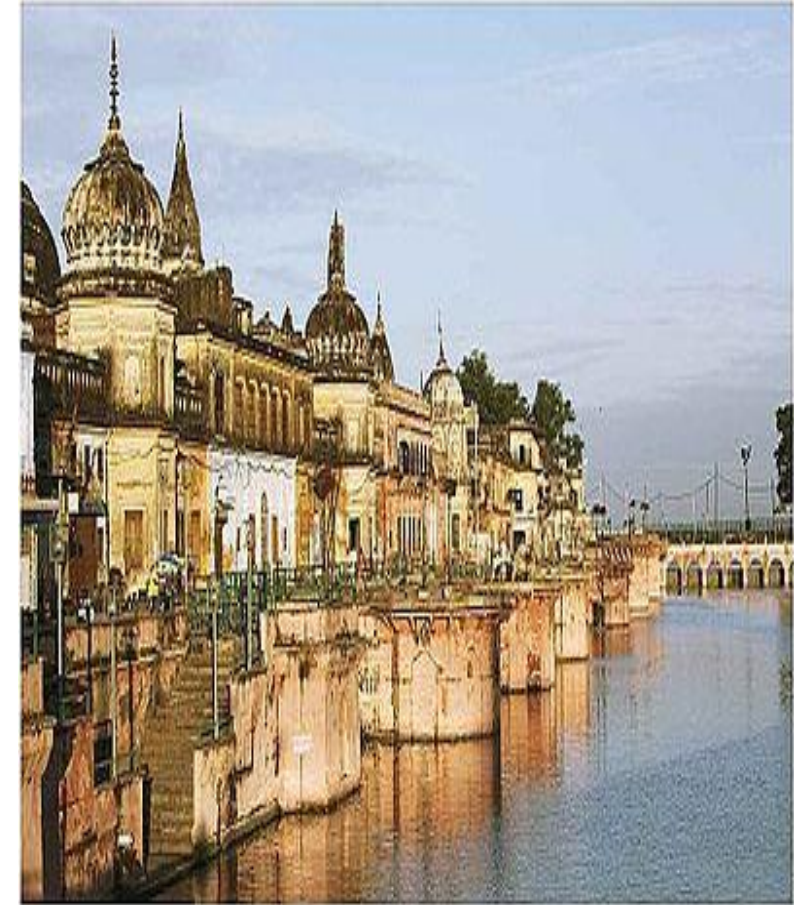
- Ayodhya, about 4 miles from Fyzabad, was the ancient capital of the Uttar Kosalas (state of Uttar Pradesh) from where many generations of Kings have ruled.
- It culminated in the Rama Rajya of the blameless and perfect Rama, the idol of the nation, who was revered as the deity incarnate.





Ayodhya

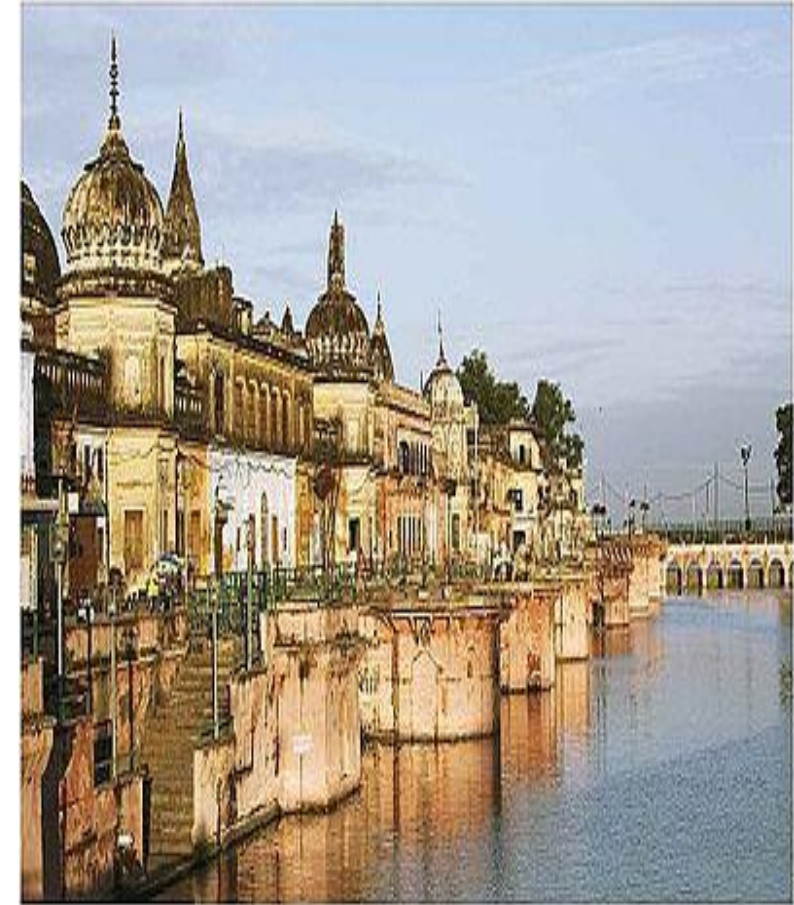
- According to ancient legends mentioned in Puranas, Manu, the progenitor of mankind, founded the city of Ayodhya and gave it to Ikshvaku to rule.
- It is believed to be the birthplace of Rama and setting of the epic Ramayana.





Ayodhya

- According to Uttara Kanda, a later addition to the Ramayana, Rama divides the kingdom into North and South Kosala at the end of his reign, with respective capitals at Shravasti and Kusavati, and installs his two sons (Lava and Kusa) to rule them.





- Mahabharata mentions sixteen Samrats (Shodasa Rajakiyam) out of which six belongs to Ayodhya.
- They are Mandatri, Sagara, Bhagiratha, Ambarisha, Dilipa Khatvanga and Rama.
- It was the venue of many an event in Hindu history, today preeminently a temple town.

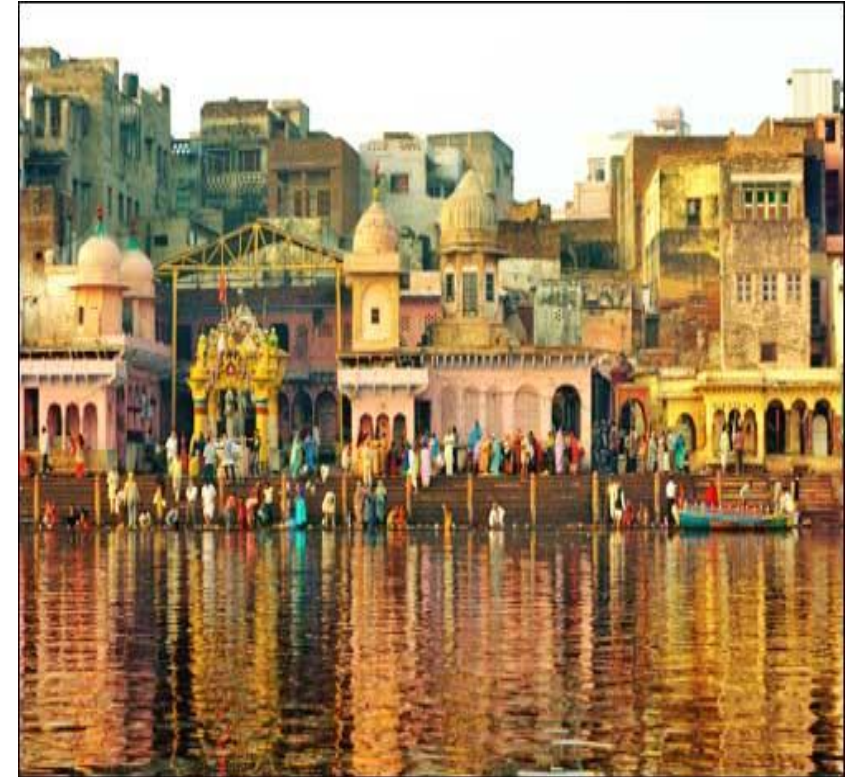


- Ayodhya is also a sacred place for Buddhists and Jains. In Buddha's time, Ayodhya was comparatively an insignificant town, but Saketa, identified with Ayodhya, was a flourishing city.
- Ayodhya is mentioned as the first of the seven sacred cities (saptapuri): Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, Kasi, Kanchi, Ujjain and Dwaraka.
- Skandapurana says that Ayodhya or the city of Vishnu (Rama) is in the shape of a fish. Pilgrims bathe at the Svargadwara, the Ram Ghat.



Mathura

- Mathura is situated on the right bank of Yamuna between Delhi and Agra (in the state of Uttar Pradesh) and is reputed to have been founded by Satrughna, brother of Rama.
- The place was known as Madhuvana and Madhu ruled it. The area came under the rule of the Yadavas.





Mathura

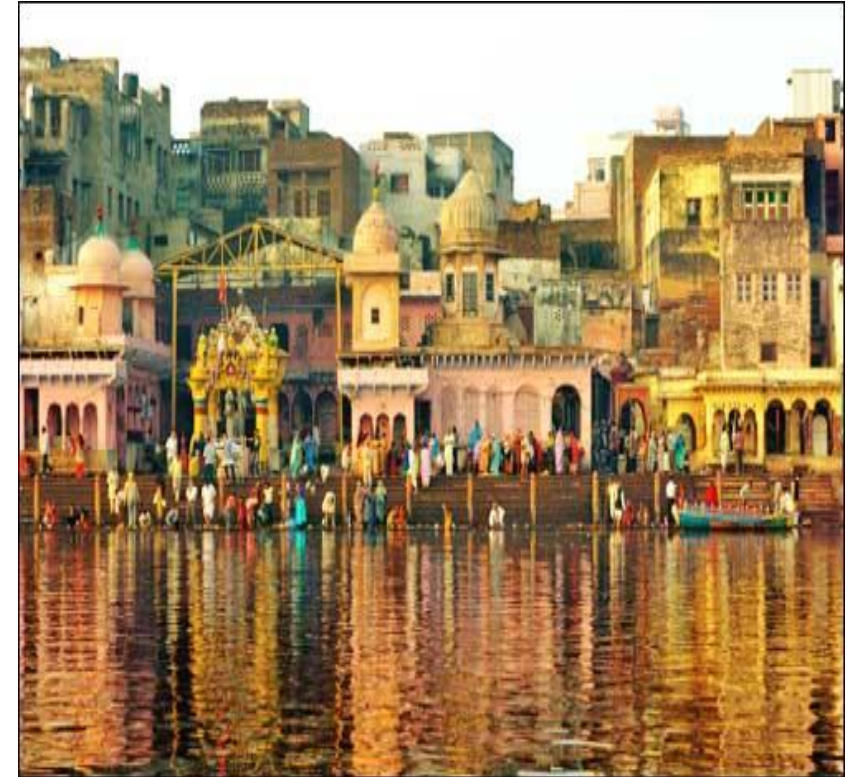
- Mathura is believed to be the birth place of Lord Krishna.
- Mathura was the capital of the Kingdom of Surasena, ruled by Kamsa, the maternal uncle of Lord Krishna.





Mathura

- *Varaha Purana* says that the Mathura Mandala is 20 *yojanas* in measure and any one bathing in Yamuna is purified from all sins.
- In the word Mathura, M, U and A are said to represent the mystic syllable 'aum' which also represent the three divinities of the Hindu Tirnity, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.





- Varaha Purana mentions various places in Mathura as connected with incidents in Lord Krishna's life. Visranti Ghat (Visram Ghat) on the bank of Yamuna is pointed out as the place where Lord Krishna rested after killing the tyrant Kamsa.
- Mathura was a centre for Bhagavata religion, prior to Buddhism and Jainism, even before the 6th century B.C. By the 11th century, Mathura was completely dominated by orthodox Hinduism.

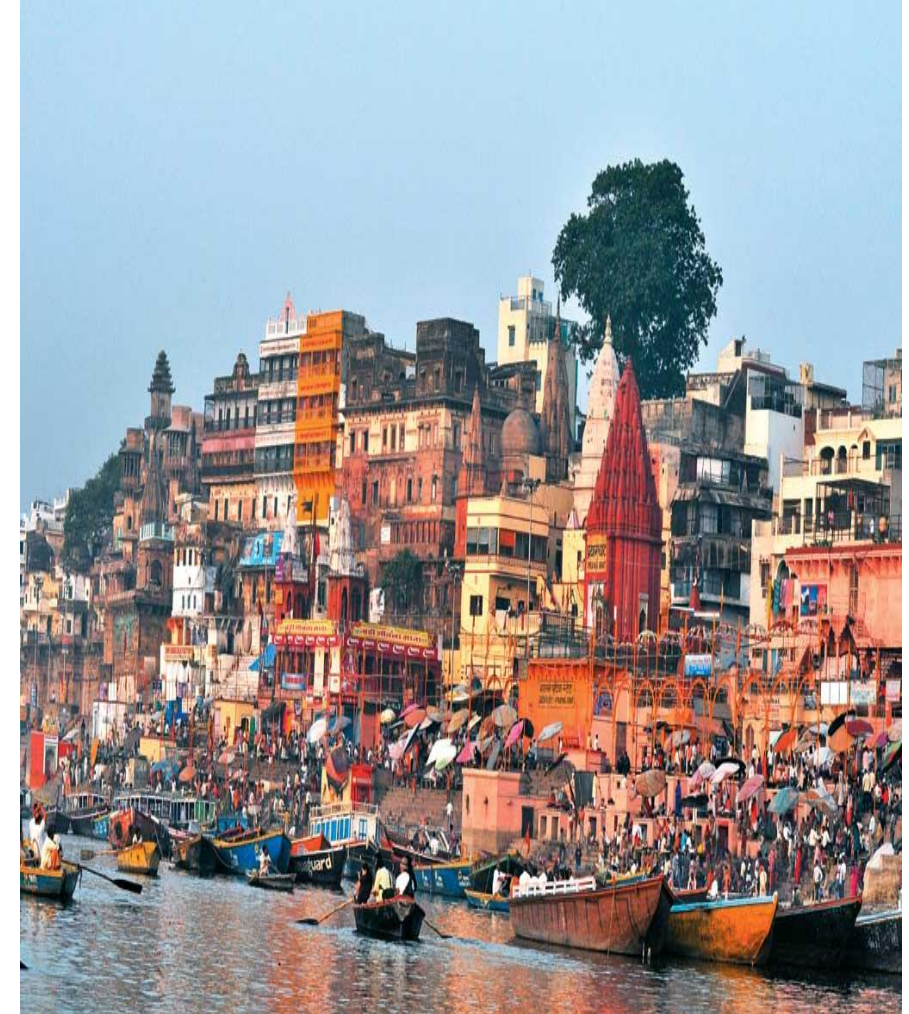


- There are 12 vanas in the vicinity of Mathura namely Madhuban, Talaban, Kumudban, Bahulaban, Kamaban, Khadiraban, Brindaban, Bhadraban, Bhandirban, Belban, Lohaban and Mohaban. Gokul and Govardhana counted among the Upavanas.
- Mathura sculptures are mainly in the spotted red sandstone. Holi festival is celebrated with great fervor on the full moon day in the month of Phalguna i.e. during February-March.



Kasi

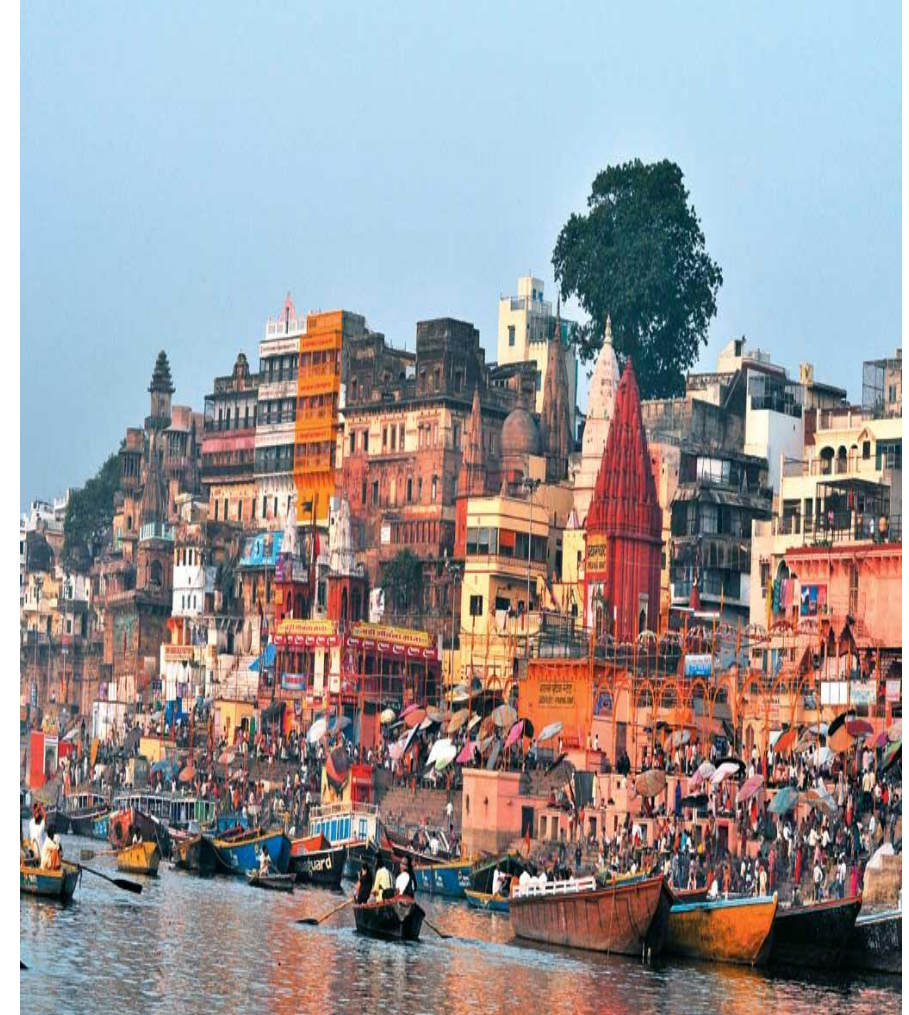
- “The supreme God, the indescribable light shines (kas = to shine) here and it is for this reason that this place has become famous by the other name Kasi.
- Kasi, also known as Varanasi, is situated on the banks of Ganges in the Uttar Pradesh.





Kasi

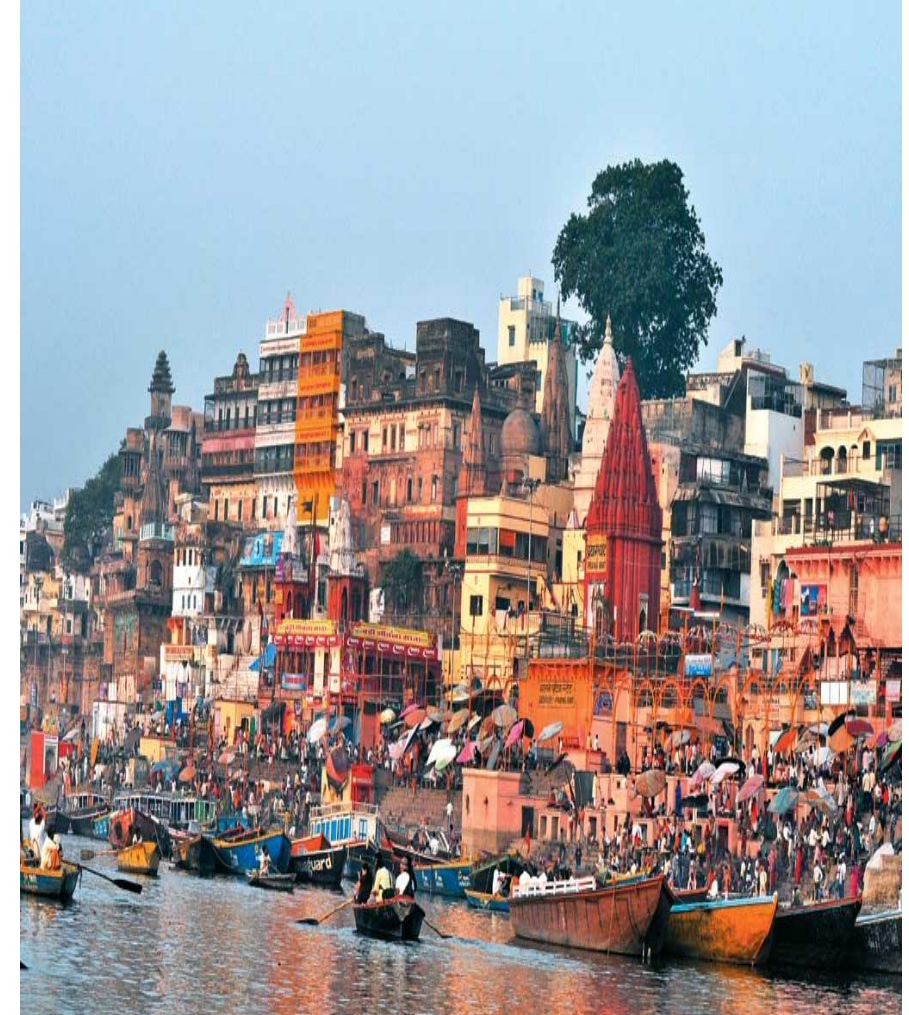
- This holy place is situated between two rivers Varana and Asi and is therefore called Varanasi.
- Kasi is the capital where Lord Sankara has elected to abide eternally.
- Kasi, also known as Avimuktaka, Varanasi, Anandakanana and Mahasmasana.





Kasi

- It is given in the name of Avimuktaka because it is free from sin (avi) and is never left by the Lord.





- Kashikhanda of the *Skanda Purana* describes the glory of Kasi in 15,000 verses.
- It is the heart of India in the point of antiquity, tradition and learning. Lord Visvanath is the presiding deity here.
- The primeval *jyotirlinga* of Kasi-Visveswara is believed to go back to the very beginning of the Epic and Puranic stages of Hindu culture, and it is one of the twelve famous *jyotirlingas*.



- Kasi is one of the three most sacred places of Hindu pilgrimage, the other two being Prayaga and Gaya.
- Pilgrims go round Kasi in a circle of some 50 miles starting from Manikarnika, known as Panchakrosi.
- Out of the various sacred places of Kasi *Padma Purana* mentions those of Visvesvara, Bindumadhava, Manikarnika and Jnana Vapi whereas *Siva Purana* mentions Tilabhandesvara Mahadeva and Dasasvamedhesvara.



- Kasi has one of the ancient Sakti Peethas represented by Goddess Visalakshi.
- While having the *darsana* of Visvesvara *Padma Purana* says that one should contemplate in his mind the image of the Lord. Hindus believe that death in the city of Kasi will bring salvation.
- Varanasi grew as an important industrial centre, famous for its muslin and silk fabrics, perfumes, ivory works, and sculpture.

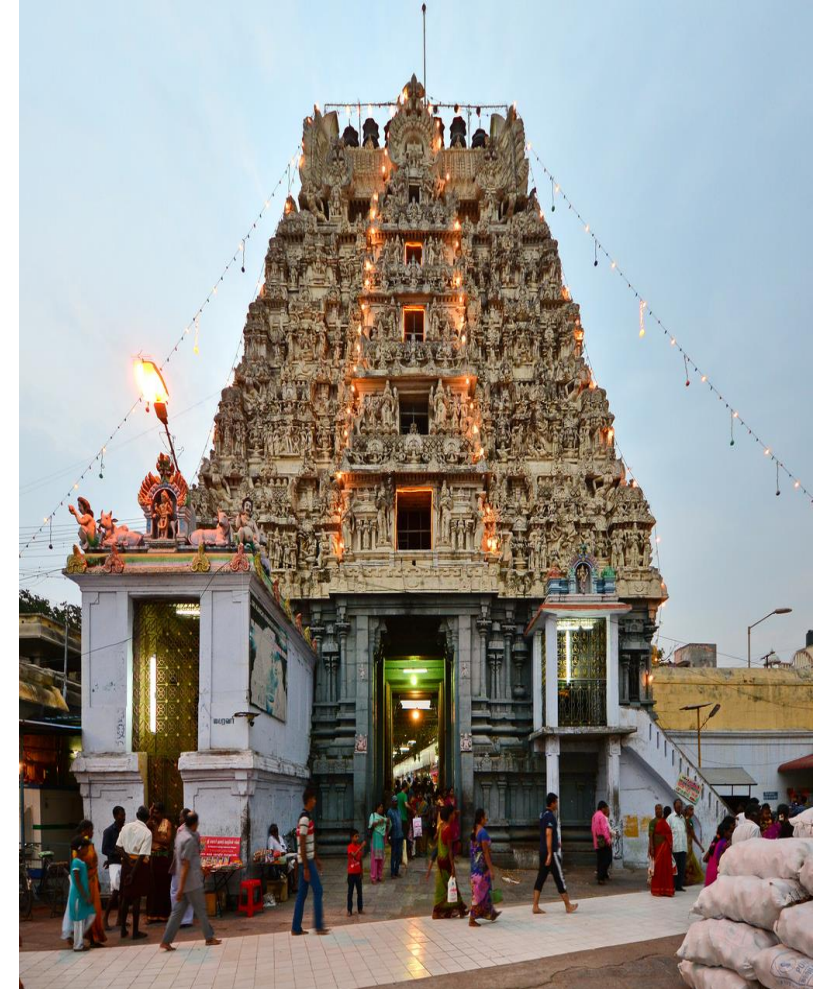


- Muslims are the influential community in this industry with nearly half a million of them working as weavers, dyers, sari finishers, and salespersons.



Kanchi

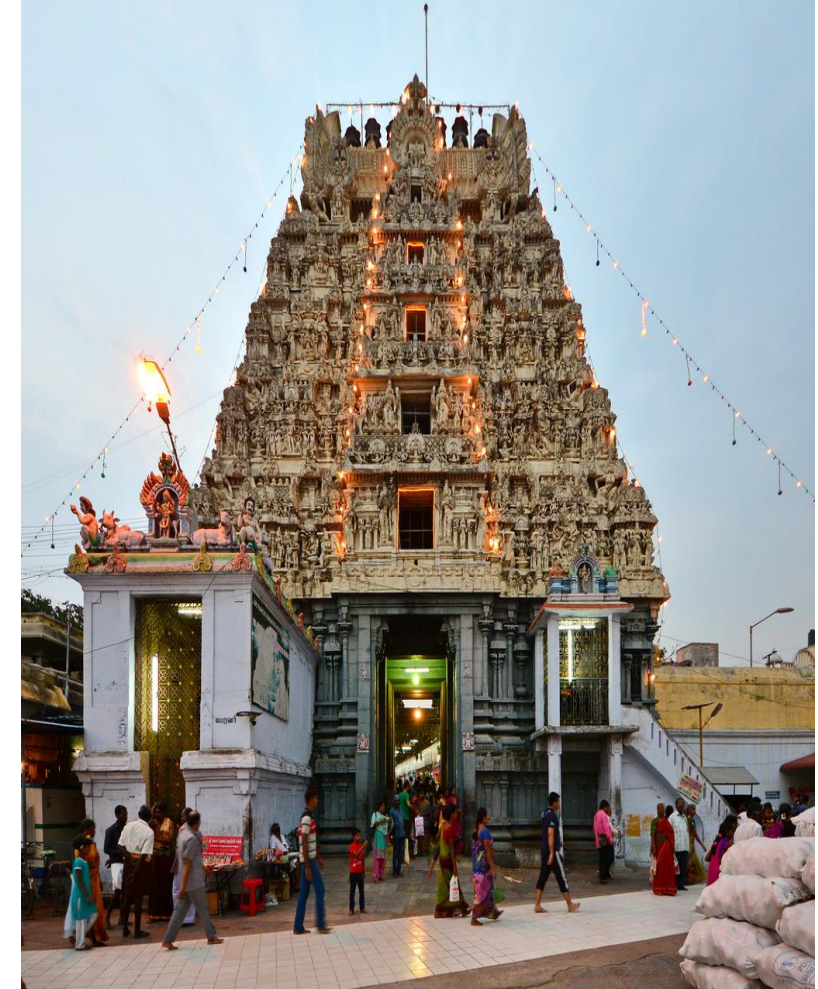
- Kanchi or Conjeevaram, situated in the Chingleput district, about 45 miles south-west of Madras, Tamil Nadu, is one of the most ancient towns of South India.
- It was the famous capital of the Pallava kings. Kanchi is sacred to both Siva and Vishnu. The city is divided into two parts:





Kanchi

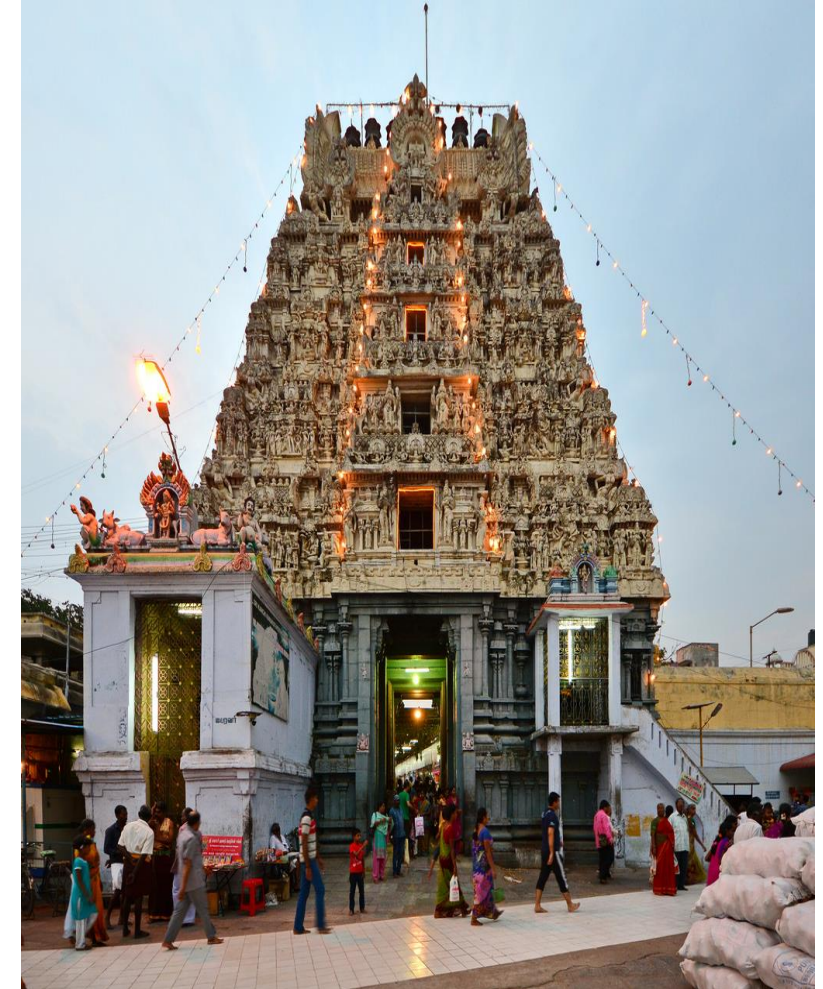
- Siva-kanchi or the big Kanchi and Vishnu-kanchi or the little Kanchi.
- *Brahmanda Purana* says that “Parvati worshipped Sankara in accordance with the prescribed rites in the presence of Vishnu at Kanchi under the *single-mango tree* with a desire that she might have the pleasure of once again seeing Sankara”.





Kanchi

- Also *Brahmanda Purana* says that Kasi and Kanchi are like the two eyes of Siva, and that Kanchi, though it is a well-known Vishnu *tirtha*, is capable of giving one an abode in the presence of Siva.





- Out of the five lingas of Sankara in South India representing the five elements, the Ekamranath linga at Kanchi represents the Prith or earth linga. The rest of the four lingas are located at Jambukesvaram, Tiruvannamalai, Kalahasti and Chidambaram.
- By the side of this temple there is the shrine of Goddess Kamakshi. Gauri who had once become ugly on Siva's displeasure again took the form of Kamakshi here. The goddess is worshipped in the form of a Yantra.



- Vamana Purana says that Kanchi is the best among towns as Jati among flowers, Rambha among women, Dwaraka among cities, Grihasthasrama among four asramas and etc.
- In Vaishnavim Hindu theology, Kanchipuram is one of the seven Tirtha (pilgrimage) sites, for spiritual release.



- The city houses Varadharaja Perumal Temple, Ekambareswarar Temple, Kamakshi Amman Temple, and Kumarakottam Temple which are some of major Hindu temples in the state.
- Now, Kanchi has been chosen as one of the heritage cities for HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) scheme of Government of India.



Ujjain (Avantika)

- Ujjain is the largest city in Ujjain district of the state of Madhya Pradesh.
- It is the fifth largest city in Madhya Pradesh by population and is the administrative centre of Ujjain district and Ujjain division.





Ujjain (Avantika)

- Ujjain city situated on the eastern bank of the Kshipra River.
- Ujjain is Ujjayini “the Victorious”, as *Skanda Purana* says because of the Victory of Lord Sankara over the Tripura Asura.
- Modern Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh was the capital of Malwa.





Ujjain (Avantika)

- It was the capital of the ancient Avanti kingdom, one of the sixteen mahajanapadas.
- Ujjain was variously called Kanaka-Sringa, Kusasthali, Avanti, Ujjayini, Padmavati, Kumudvati, Amaravati and Visala.





Ujjain (Avantika)

- Patanjali in his *Mahabhashya* says that sunrise can be seen in the town of Mahishmati while walking early morning from Ujjayini.





- A visit to Ujjain, one of the seven sacred cities, brings liberation. The famous Kumbha Mela takes place in Ujjain every 12 years when Jupiter is in Scorpio.
- It is held at Prayaga, Haridwar and Nasik when Jupiter is respectively placed in Taurus, Acquarius and Leo.
- It is said that Brihaspati ran away with the Kumbha or pot of nectar which came out of churning up the ocean.



- A few drops of nectar fell from the Kumbha at these four places which are considered holy.
- The temple of Lord Mahakala, the most famous spot of Ujjain, is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Sankara.
- Pilgrims take bath on the Ranghat of Kshipra river and then worship the deity.
- Skanda Purana describes this area as the Mahakala Vana. Agni Purana calls it the best of Tirthas.



Puri, The Jagannathapur

- Puri is a city and a Municipality in the state of Odisha in eastern India. It is 310 miles from Calcutta.
- The temple is situated on a gentle slope, known as Nila Parvata, by the sea.
- Puri is in the coastal delta of the Mahanadi River on the shores of the Bay of Bengal.





Puri, The Jagannathapur

- It is the district headquarters of Puri district and is situated on the Bay of Bengal, 60 kilometres (37 mi) south of the state capital of Bhubaneswar.
- It is also known as Sri Jagannatha Dhama after the 12th century. Jagannatha Temple located in the city.





Puri, The Jagannathapur

- It is one of the original Char Dham pilgrimage sites for Hindus. Brahma Purana calls it the best of all tirth as, ten yojanas in extent.
- Lord Purushottama, supreme over inconstant things and the eternal, abides in this kshetra. Puri is called the mystic navel of the earth.





- Puri is known by several names since the ancient times, and was locally known as "Sri Kshetra" and Lord Jagannatha temple is known as "Badadeula".





- Puri and the Jagannatha Temple were invaded 18 times by Hindu and Muslim rulers, from the 4th century AD till the early 19th century with the objective of looting the treasures of the temple.





- Odisha, including Puri and its temple, were part of British India from 1803 till India attained independence in August 1947.
- Even though princely states do not exist in India today, the heirs of the Gajapati Dynasty of Khurda still perform the ritual duties of the temple.





- The temple town has many Hindu religious mathas or monasteries.
- The Lord Jagannatha temple has three wooden images of Krishna, Balarama (elder brother of Krishna) and Subhadra (sister of Krishna and Balarama).





- For the people of Puri, Lord Jagannatha, visualized as Lord Krishna, is synonymous with their city.
- They believe that Lord Jagannatha looks after the welfare of the state.





Dwaraka (Dwaravati)

- Dwarka, a city in Gujarat's Dwarka district is situated on Okhamandal peninsula's western shore and along the banks of River Gomti.
- Dwaraja is a coastal town in Jamnagar district of Gujarat.





Dwaraka (Dwaravati)

- It was also a port-city, having trade relations with many sea-faring nations.
- It could be that this ancient port-city was a gateway for foreign sea-faring kingdoms into the Indian mainland and vice versa.





Dwaraka (Dwaravati)

- It was founded by a clan of Yadava chiefs who fled from the Surasena Kingdom out of fear of king Jarasandha of Magadha.





Dwaraka (Dwaravati)

- Dvārakā, also known as *Dvāravatī*, possibly meaning having many gates, or alternatively having one or several very grand gates is a sacred city in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism.





Dwaraka (Dwaravati)

- The name Dvaraka is said to have been given to the place by Krishna, a major deity in Hinduism.
- Dvaraka is one of the Sapta Puri (seven sacred cities) of Hinduism.





- In the *Mahabharata*, it was a city located in what is now Dwaraka, formerly called Kushasthali, the fort of which had to be repaired by the Yadavas.
- According to legendary, Kusasthali had been Lord Krishna's ancestral native on his maternal side.
- In this epic, the city is described as a capital of the Anarta Kingdom.
- According to the *Harivamsa* the city was located in the region of the Sindhu

Kingdom.

Topic



- In the Hindu epics and the Vaishnava Puranas, Dvaraka is called Dvaravati and is one of seven Tirtha (pilgrimage) sites for spiritual liberation.
- The other six are Mathura, Ayodhya, Kashi, Kanchipuram, Avantika (Ujjain) and Puri.



- The original Dwaraka of Krishna's time is described as being twelve *yojanas* in circumference in the middle of the sea with numerous parks, high palaces, golden domes, big *gopuras* etc.
- The main attraction of the modern town of Dwaraka is the famous temple of Dwarakadhisha, also called the Trilokasundara or the Jagat temple.
- The image of Lord Dwarakadhisha is of black stone three feet high with four arms. Pilgrims touch the feet of the Lord and place tulsi on his feet.



- Dwarka had always been the fond hub for archaeologists due to its close association with the great epic Mahabharata and the mythical claims about the sunken city.