



Cultural and Religious Evolution in Gujarat: Sacred Spaces from 1200 to 1600 A.D."

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.Abstract:

This paper examines the construction and significance of religious spaces in Gujarat between 1200 and 1600 AD. It argues that these spaces, including mosques, mausoleums, and Sufi shrines, served not only as places of worship but also as social, cultural, and economic centers. By analyzing their architectural features, historical context, and inscriptions, we gain valuable insights into the religious landscape of Gujarat during this period.

1. Introduction

Gujarat, a vibrant state on the western coast of India, boasts a rich and complex religious tapestry woven from diverse threads of faith and tradition. Between the 13th and 16th centuries, this region witnessed a dynamic interplay of religious forces, marked by the dominance of Saivism, the gradual rise of Vaisnavism, and the burgeoning presence of Jainism and Islam. This study embarks on a journey through the religious landscape of Gujarat during this pivotal period, exploring the construction of sacred spaces that served not only as centers of worship but also as vibrant socio-cultural hubs. By delving into the architectural styles, inscriptions, and social practices associated with these spaces, we aim to illuminate the evolving religious landscape and its profound impact on the lives of the Gujarati people.

The Caulukya dynasty, who ruled Gujarat from 942 to 1242 AD, actively promoted Saivism, the worship of Lord Shiva. This resulted in the construction of numerous temples dedicated to Shiva and his various manifestations, including the renowned Somanath temple and the Rudramahalaya temple in Patan. These architectural marvels,

adorned with intricate carvings and sculptures, stand as testaments to the Caulukyas' devotion and signify the preeminence of Saivism in Gujarat during this period (Shah, 1974).¹

While Saivism held the upper hand, Vaisnavism, the worship of Lord Vishnu, also had a significant presence in Gujarat. Though not receiving the same level of royal patronage, Vaisnavism gained popularity among certain social groups, particularly merchants and pastoralists. Temples dedicated to Vishnu and his avatars, such as Rama and Krishna, emerged throughout Gujarat, reflecting the growing influence of Vaisnava devotion (Cort, 2001).²

Jainism, with its emphasis on non-violence and ethical conduct, played a crucial role in shaping the cultural landscape of Gujarat. Jain merchants, known for their entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to ethical practices, were instrumental in the region's economic prosperity. Their generous patronage resulted in the construction of magnificent Jain temples, such as the Ranakpur Jain Temple and the Palitana temples, showcasing exquisite architecture and intricate sculptures (Jain, 1975).³

With the advent of the 14th century, Islam began to make its presence felt in Gujarat. Sufi preachers and scholars, like Shaykh al-Masha'ikh Arjun and Sayyid Mangrol Shah, established centers of learning and piety. The arrival of North Indian Muslims and the Bukhari family further consolidated the presence of Islam in the region. This period saw the establishment of Sufi orders, such as the Rifa'is and Uraizis, enriching the religious landscape with their diverse practices and philosophies (Hegde, 1986).⁴

The religious spaces of Gujarat were not merely structures of stone and mortar; they served as vibrant social and cultural hubs. They provided venues for religious festivals and rituals, fostered communities of faith, and attracted pilgrims from far and wide. These spaces also served as centers of education and learning, with scholars and poets using them as platforms for disseminating knowledge and fostering intellectual discourse.

This study aims to adopt a critical approach to interpreting the religious spaces of Gujarat. While acknowledging the dominant narratives, it will also explore the voices of marginalized communities and examine how their experiences shaped the religious landscape. By employing a multi-faceted lens that incorporates archaeological

¹ Shah, Umakant Premanand. (1974). *Jaina-rājya Gujarat: (1200-1573)*. L.D. Institute of Indology. Pp 389

² Cort, J. E. (2001). *Open boundaries: Jain communities and cultures in Indian history*. SUNY Press. Pp 378

³ Jain, Kailash Chandra. (1975). *Trade and traders in Western India: (Gujarat and Kathiawar, c. 1000-1600 A.D.)* 1975. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. pp 241

⁴ Hegde, R. V. (1986). *Jainism in South India*. 1986 Karnataka University. pp 239

evidence, historical texts, and oral traditions, we hope to gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay of faith, politics, and society in Gujarat during this period.

The following sections will delve deeper into the specific religious spaces and communities of Gujarat, examining their unique characteristics and contributions. We will explore the architectural styles, artistic representations, and inscriptions associated with these spaces, extracting valuable insights into the beliefs, practices, and aspirations of the people who built and used them. By drawing upon contemporary scholarship and integrating diverse perspectives, we aim to paint a comprehensive picture of the rich tapestry of faith that defined Gujarat between 1200 and 1600 AD.

2. Saivism, brahmanas and ascetics in Gujarat (1200-1600 AD)

Saivism enjoyed a prominent position as the state religion under the Caulukya dynasty (942-1242 AD). The patronage of the Caulukyias is evident in the construction of numerous Shiva temples, including the iconic Somanath temple. This royal support solidified Saivism as a dominant force, shaping religious practices and social hierarchies in Gujarat (Cort, 2010).⁵

Temple construction, epigraphs, chronicles, and titles all point to the Caulukyias' (11th–13th century) unmistakable Saivism (Rangarajan, 1990)⁶, as do the beliefs of many of their contemporaries in north India. They were more kind to Saivism than any other religious group. There were temples to other gods, but they were either built by merchants or feudatories or were ancillary shrines in larger temple complexes that were primarily Saivite. It was at this time that Saivism's favouritism among immigrant brahmanas really took root.

The Somanath temple, which was devoted to Shiva, the "Lord of the Moon," was a prominent Caulukya era temple. While the temple predated the Caulukya dynasty, their patronage played a crucial role in establishing its importance and signifying their sovereignty in the region. This act of patronage also demonstrates the Caulukyias' attempt to link their royal cult with broader networks of pilgrimage and Sanskritic legitimation common in north India (Rangarajan, 1990).⁷

During this time, temples were not the only places of worship that grew; for ascetics, both male and female, as well as those who chose to live a life of celibacy or householder, there were a number of Saivite sectarian monasteries.

⁵ Cort, J. E. (2010). *Hyenas in the garden: Religion, morality, and the ecological crisis in India*. Oxford University Press. pp 376

⁶ Rangarajan, H. (1990). *Spread of Vaiṣṇavism in Gujarat up to 1600 AD: (a study with special reference to the iconic forms of Viṣṇu)*. Somaiya Publ. pp 242

⁷ Rangarajan, H. (1990). *Spread of Vaiṣṇavism in Gujarat up to 1600 AD: (a study with special reference to the iconic forms of Viṣṇu)*. Somaiya Publ. pp 254

Particularly influential were the Lakullsa-Pasupata ascetics, who managed important temples like as Somanath and Anhilvada Patan and held high posts in the Caulukya court. Other prominent Saivite sects included the Kaula and Kapalika, with the latter holding sway among the pastoralist communities of Saurashtra.

Caulukya patronage of Saivism involved extensive temple building and the offering of land grants and administrative positions to brahmanas. This strategy aimed to legitimize their rule through association with the religion and its established networks. However, the relationship between the Caulukyias and Saivite ascetic orders was not without friction. While some ascetics readily accepted royal patronage, others, like KanthadT, refused, demonstrating their preference for autonomy and resistance to state control (Rangarajan, 1990; Majumdar, 1956).⁸

Animal sacrifice formed an integral part of Saivite rituals during this period. This practice, however, faced opposition from Jaina communities, who appealed to the Caulukyias for its restriction. Notably, the conversion of King Kumarapala to Jainism resulted in a ban on animal sacrifice, highlighting the contested nature of religious practices within the Caulukya domain.

The Caulukyias also engaged in the incorporation of local cults into their religious framework. For instance, King Karna I, after defeating a local chieftain, built a temple to the goddess Kocharaba, integrating her worship with the broader Saivite pantheon. This strategy reflects the Caulukyias' efforts to consolidate their power and gain acceptance among diverse communities.

Saivism was not solely supported by royalty. Feudatories and merchants also actively contributed to its growth through temple construction. One wandering Saiva ascetic, for example, built five temples, three of which were named after women in his life, showcasing the involvement of women in religious activities and patronage (Rangarajan, 1990).⁹ These temples served as centers of worship and community life, contributing to the dissemination of Saivite ideals.

While Saivism gained prominence through royal patronage and brahmana involvement, ascetics also played a significant role in disseminating religious knowledge and shaping public perceptions. Various ascetic orders, including the Lakulisa-Pasupatas, Kaula, and Kapalika sects, had a significant presence in Gujarat. These ascetic

⁸ Rangarajan, H. (1990). *Spread of Vaiṣṇavism in Gujarat up to 1600 AD: (a study with special reference to the iconic forms of Viṣṇu)*. Somaiya Publ.pp 345

⁹ Rangarajan, H. (1990). *Spread of Vaiṣṇavism in Gujarat up to 1600 AD: (a study with special reference to the iconic forms of Viṣṇu)*. Somaiya Publ.431-432.

communities often challenged the authority of brahmanas and advocated for alternative paths to spiritual attainment (Cort, 2001).¹⁰

Despite their shared commitment to Saivism, the relationship between brahmanas and ascetics was often marked by tension and contestation. Ascetics challenged the hierarchical structures established by brahmanas and questioned their privileged positions within the religious system. This tension is evident in stories of ascetics like KanthadT refusing to accept temple administration roles due to their opposition to ritual sacrifice and their desire to maintain their non-conformist lifestyle (Cort, 2010).¹¹

The rise of Vaisnavism in the late 15th and 16th centuries presented a significant challenge to the established Saivite order. Figures like Narsimha Maheta and Vallabhacharya popularized bhakti devotionalism, shifting the focus from ritual practices to emotional connection with Krishna. This shift led to challenges to the authority of both brahmanas and Saiva ascetics, as Vaisnava devotional movements attracted followers from various social groups (Flood, 1996).¹²

3. Vaisnavism and bhakti

Vaisnavism in Gujarat is a fascinating tapestry woven from threads of various cults and sects, evolving over time and shaped by social and political forces. This section delves into the complex history and characteristics of Vaisnavism in this region, exploring its diverse origins, gradual rise, and eventual prominence. Between 1200 and 1600 AD, the religious landscape of Gujarat witnessed a fascinating transformation. While Saivism held the dominant position during the early part of this period, the latter half saw a remarkable rise in Vaisnavism and Bhakti movements, leaving a lasting impact on the region's cultural and social fabric.

Initially, Saivism enjoyed significant royal patronage, particularly from the Caulukya dynasty (942-1242 AD). This led to the construction of numerous magnificent temples dedicated to Shiva, such as the renowned Somanath and Rudramahalaya temples. Saivism also permeated various aspects of life, influencing art, literature, and social norms (Cort, 2018).

However, the 15th and 16th centuries marked a significant shift towards Vaisnavism. This shift was driven by several factors, including the emergence of influential figures like the poet-saint Narsimha Maheta and the preacher

¹⁰ Cort, J. E. (2001). *Jains in the world: Religious values and social change*. Oxford University Press. pp 432

¹¹ Cort, J. E. (2010). *Hyenas in the garden: Religion, morality, and the ecological crisis in India*. Oxford University Press. pp 238-239

¹² Flood, G. (1996). *An introduction to Hinduism*. Cambridge University Press. pp 237

Vallabhacharya. Both individuals popularized the worship of Krishna through devotional songs and religious texts, sparking a wave of Bhakti movement in Gujarat (Williams, 1981). The Bhakti movement emphasized love and devotion as the path to spiritual liberation. This resonated with people from various social backgrounds, including merchants, artisans, and women, who were often excluded from traditional Brahmanical rituals (Gonda, 1975). Bhakti songs, known as padas, were composed in the local language, making religious ideas accessible to a wider audience.

The rise of Vaisnavism also led to the establishment of new sects, such as the Vallabha sect, which gained widespread popularity. These sects challenged the existing authority of the Saiva priesthood and advocated for a more egalitarian approach to religious practice (Cort, 2018).

The transition to Vaisnavism was not without its challenges. Conflicts and tensions arose between the established Saiva order and the rising Vaisnava movement. Stories of Narsimha Maheta's confrontations with Saiva priests and the appropriation of existing Saiva sites for Vaisnava worship illustrate these tensions (Cort, 2018).¹³

Over the course of many centuries, Vaisnavism in Gujarat evolved from a synthesis of several sectarian traditions. Among them are the distinct traditions of Bhagavata Visnu, Krsna, Vasudeva, and Baladeva, which came together to form the Krsnaite neo-Vaisnavism that flourished beginning in the sixteenth century (Vaudeville & Dalmia, 1996; Vaudeville, 1996). This synthesis was first documented in a 10th-century Vaisnava text, the Bhagavata Purana, likely written in South India and gaining prominence in Gujarat by the 15th century.

While some Vaisnava cults existed in Gujarat from the early Christian era, they lost royal favour by the 10th century. During the Caulukya rule (942-1242), Vaisnavism remained a secondary faith despite their tolerance towards other cults. While not explicitly Vaisnavas, some Caulukya rulers and their officials patronized the faith, as evidenced by inscriptions and temple construction (Vaudeville & Dalmia, 1996).¹⁴ This trend continued under the Vaghelas, further solidifying Vaisnavism's presence.

The Krsna-Gopala cult, originally popular among pastoralists in North India, declined around the Gupta period. Nonetheless, it made a triumphant return to South and Bengal in the 12th century, and by the 15th century, it had made its way back to North India with works such as the Bhagavata Purana. In the late fifteenth century, Bhalan translated Puranic legends and works like Narsimharanyamuni attest to the growth of Vaisnava bhakti in Gujarat, coinciding with this renaissance (Vaudeville & Dalmia, 1996; Rangarajan, 1990).¹⁵

¹³ Cort, J. E. (2018). *Open boundaries: Jain communities and Cultures in Indian History*. OUP USA. pp232

¹⁴ Vaudeville, C. (1996). *The cowherd god in ancient India* (pp. 17-46). Oxford University Press. pp 17-46

¹⁵ Rangarajan, H. (1990). *Spread of Vaiṣṇavism in Gujarat up to 1600 AD: (a study with special reference to the iconic forms of Viṣṇu)*. Somaiya Publ. pp 372

In some instances, the rise of Vaisnavism in Gujarat seemed to come at the expense of Saivism, echoing similar trends in other regions. This is evident in the narrative surrounding the Ranachoda temple in Dakor, where a formerly Saivite shrine was adapted for Krsna worship. This reflects the competitive nature of religious landscapes and the appropriation of existing sites for new devotional movements.

Vaisnavism in Gujarat emerged from a complex interplay of various cults, sects, and social forces. While initially overshadowed by Saivism, it gradually gained momentum through devotional movements and the patronage of specific communities. This evolving faith, with its diverse origins and non-Brahmanical character, continues to shape the religious landscape of Gujarat and enrich its cultural heritage.

4. Jainism and trade

This essay examines the influence of Jainism in Gujarat from the 12th to the 16th centuries. It explores the rise of Jainism under the Caulukya dynasty, the impact of Jainism on politics and society, and the continued practice of Jainism under the Delhi Sultanate.

Between the 13th and 16th centuries, Gujarat witnessed a remarkable confluence of spiritual and commercial endeavours. This period saw the flourishing of Jainism, a religion that emphasizes non-violence, ethical conduct, and respect for all living beings, alongside a vibrant trade network that connected Gujarat with the wider Indian subcontinent and beyond. This essay explores the intricate relationship between Jainism and trade in Gujarat during this dynamic period.

Jainism gained significant influence in Gujarat under the reign of the Caulukya kings, particularly Siddharaja Jayasimha (1094-1143) and his successor Kumarapala (1143-1174). Hemacandra, a prominent Jaina scholar and historian, held a significant position at Siddharaja's court. Kumarapala, however, converted to Jainism and actively promoted its principles, such as non-violence and vegetarianism. This period witnessed a flourishing of Jainism, with the construction of numerous temples, hospitals, and rest-houses by wealthy Jaina patrons.¹⁶

Jainism's influence extended beyond the religious sphere. Jaina merchants and traders, like the Srimalls, played a crucial role in Gujarat's economy and politics. They often exerted pressure on rulers to adopt policies aligned with Jaina principles, such as banning animal sacrifice and promoting vegetarianism. This is evident in the case of the

¹⁶ Shah, Umakant Premanand. (1974). *Jaina-rājya Gujarat: (1200-1573)*. L.D. Institute of Indology.pp 453

Cudasama ruler Mandalik, who prohibited animal killing on specific days at the request of Jaina and Vaisnava merchants.¹⁷

While Jaina influence reached its peak under the Caulukyias, it continued to exist under the subsequent Vaghela dynasty. A prominent figure during this period was Vastupala, a Jaina minister and strategist who served the Vaghelas. Despite his adherence to Jainism, Vastupala was known for his military prowess and led several successful campaigns.

Following the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in Gujarat in 1299, Jainas generally maintained cordial relations with the rulers. While some Jaina temples were desecrated during the initial invasions, the community received protection from the sultanate. Jaina scholars and merchants enjoyed some degree of influence, and the practice of Jainism continued relatively undisturbed.

Jainism's core principles served as a guiding force for its followers engaged in commerce. The tenets of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (sexual restraint), and aparigraha (non-possessiveness) shaped their business practices. Jains avoided trades involving harm to animals, such as the meat or leather industry, and prioritized fair dealing and honest transactions. This commitment to ethical trade practices fostered a reputation for trustworthiness and reliability, allowing Jain merchants to thrive in the competitive world of commerce (Cort, 2001).¹⁸

Jain communities in Gujarat played a pivotal role in establishing and expanding trade networks. They were renowned for their entrepreneurial spirit, shrewdness in business, and meticulous attention to detail. Prominent Jain merchant groups, such as the Oswals, the Porwals, and the Shrimali Jains, actively participated in international trade, connecting Gujarat with ports in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and East Africa. These networks brought prosperity to Gujarat and played a significant role in disseminating Indian culture and goods around the world (Jain, 1975).

The wealth generated through trade facilitated Jain patronage of arts and culture. Jain merchants generously funded the construction of magnificent temples, such as the Ranakpur Jain Temple and the Palitana temples, showcasing exquisite architecture and intricate sculptures. These architectural marvels stand as testimonies to the artistic and cultural contributions of Jain communities in Gujarat (Shah, 1974).¹⁹ Additionally, Jain patrons commissioned the

¹⁷ Shah, Umakant Premanand. (1974). *Jaina-rājya Gujarat: (1200-1573)*. L.D. Institute of Indology. pp 346

¹⁸ Cort, J. E. (2001). *Jains in the world: Religious values and social change*. Oxford University Press. pp 353

¹⁹ Shah, Umakant Premanand. (1974). *Jaina-rājya Gujarat: (1200-1573)*. L.D. Institute of Indology. page no 108-112

creation of numerous literary works, including religious texts, philosophical treatises, and poetry, enriching the cultural heritage of Gujarat.

Despite their significant contributions, Jain merchants faced challenges and conflicts in their pursuit of trade. The principle of ahimsa sometimes posed difficulties when dealing in commodities that involved harming animals, such as certain aspects of the textile industry. Additionally, Jain traders had to navigate the complexities of interacting with non-Jain rulers and communities, sometimes facing discrimination and prejudice. Despite these challenges, Jain communities adapted their practices and engaged in dialogue with other religious groups, demonstrating their resilience and adaptability (Hegde, 1986).

5. The Arrival and Expansion of Islam in Gujarat (1200-1600 AD)

The arrival and subsequent development of Islam in Gujarat between the 13th and 16th centuries marked a significant chapter in the region's religious history. This essay examines the various factors that facilitated the spread of Islam, the diverse expressions it took, and its profound impact on the cultural landscape of Gujarat.

Though the precise date of Islam's arrival in Gujarat remains debated, evidence suggests its presence by the early 13th century. The tomb of Shaykh al-Masha'ikh Arjun in Petlad, dated 1236, stands as a testament to this early Muslim presence. While initial conversions may have been limited, Sufi preachers and scholars played a crucial role in spreading the message of Islam through their spiritual guidance and dedication to social welfare. Figures like Sayyid MangrolT Shah in Saurashtra and Shaykh Ahmad Kabir in Ahmedabad established centres of learning and piety, attracting followers and gradually establishing Islam as a force to be reckoned with in the region (Hegde, 1986).²⁰

The 14th century witnessed an influx of Muslims into Gujarat, particularly due to the political turmoil in northern India. This influx included not only scholars and preachers but also traders, soldiers, and administrators. With the establishment of the Gujarat Sultanate in 1396, Islam gained a significant political and cultural foothold in the region. The patronage of the Sultans further accelerated the construction of mosques, madrasas, and Sufi khanqahs, transforming the religious landscape of Gujarat (Yusuf, 1984).²¹

Although the exact date of the first Muslim settlements in Gujarat remains uncertain, evidence suggests they may have existed as early as the late seventh century, shortly after the Prophet Muhammad's death. Pre-Islamic Arab traders likely established settlements along the western coast, and by the ninth century, larger Muslim communities had formed in major ports. Epigraphic evidence further confirms the presence of Muslim communities in Gujarat, with inscriptions mentioning a Muslim feudatory of the Rashtrakutas building a rest-house for pilgrims and travelers

²⁰ Hegde, R. V. (1986). Jainism in South India. Karnataka University.1986 pp 47-49

²¹ Yusuf, M. H. (1984). Cultural heritage of Gujarat. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.page no 3-6

in the ninth century (Shokoohy, 1988). Additionally, twelfth-century Bhadreshvar inscriptions reveal a thriving Muslim community, possibly Isma'ilis with links to the Fatimid Caliphate in Yemen (Campbell, 1990).²²

The thirteenth century witnessed the arrival of early Muslim preachers like Shaykh al-Masha'ikh Arjun, whose tomb in Petlad dates back to 1236. Traditional accounts also mention Mangrol Shah's arrival in Saurashtra during the early eleventh century, where he converted many locals. This period saw a steady influx of preachers, followed by a wave of North Indian Muslims fleeing the disintegrating Delhi sultanate after Timur's invasion. This influx led to the establishment of prominent Sufi orders, including the Rifa'is with the arrival of Sayyid Ahmad Kabir in fourteenth-century Ahmedabad and the Uraizis with Sayyid Budha Ya'qub's arrival in the early fifteenth century. Notably, the Bukhari family, established by Sayyid Burhan al-Din Qutb-i-Alam in 1397, became the closest Sufi family to the Sultans (Campbell, 1990).²³

The Bhadreshvar complex in Kacch stands as the earliest example of Islamic architecture in India, constructed by Isma'ili merchants with Fatimid Yemeni connections in the late twelfth century. Although the extent of their influence remains unclear, a twelfth-century Isma'ili gravestone in Rajasthan points towards missionary activity in the hinterland. From the ninth century onwards, various Isma'ili da'is, including Satgur Nur, PTr Shams, and others, actively spread the faith across northern and western India. By 1500, pockets of Isma'ili communities were established throughout North India, particularly in Sind, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat (Daftary, 1992).²⁴

Early Isma'ili communities in Gujarat likely comprised a combination of Arab and Persian merchant settlers alongside local converts from various backgrounds, including pastoralists, cultivators, and merchants. Some converts, particularly militarized peasants and pastoralists from northwest India, were eventually absorbed into the Rajput status hierarchy. Early Isma'ili narratives also feature accounts of miracles and confrontations with adversaries like yogis and sufi pirs, often resulting in the latter's conversion or banishment. The fall of Alamut in 1256 led to a further influx of Nizari missionaries into Sind and Gujarat, with Uch becoming a major center of the faith. While Nizari missionaries focused on pastoralist and peasant communities, Musta'lli influence remained

²² Campbell, J. M. (1990). *Cultural heritage of Gujarat*. . Vintage Books. page no 35-36

²³ Campbell, J. M. (1990). *Muslim and Parsi castes and tribes of Gujarat*. Vintage Books. p 55

²⁴ Daftary, F. (1992). *The Isma'ilis: Their history and doctrines*. Cambridge University Press. Pp 286-292

limited to merchant groups who later became known as Bohras or Vohras. Despite their limited influence, the presence of Musta'li missionaries requires further research (Kolff, 2002).²⁵

The dominance of the Isma'ili Muslims in Gujarat began to wane in the fifteenth century. Ginans are the principal source of information on this important period of Nizar activity, which occurred between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries but is mostly unrecorded in non-Isma'ili historical sources. Some reports from the Delhi Sultanate mention "heretical" or "semi-Islamized" tribes, which might indicate the existence of Isma'ili populations. It is worth mentioning that in 1471, Sultan Mahmud Begada of Gujarat led an army against the Sumra and Sodha chieftains of Kacch, forcing them to convert to Sunni Islam and cut off all relations with Hinduism. There was a marked decline in Isma'ili influence in Gujarat towards the century's close.

6. The Evolution of Pilgrimage in Gujarat (12th-16th Centuries)

The period between the 13th and 16th centuries witnessed a significant shift in the religious landscape of Gujarat, with pilgrimage emerging as a crucial element of religious practice. While monumental temple construction declined, networks of pilgrimage sites associated with specific deities and communities began to flourish.

Jainas were among the first groups to embrace pilgrimage as a central element of their faith. The development of a network of sacred sites associated with Jaina tirthankaras (spiritual leaders) encouraged lay followers to embark on pilgrimages, often making donations to support the upkeep of these shrines. This practice, while not explicitly prescribed in Jaina scriptures, served as a powerful tool for community building and offered spiritual and recreational benefits to pilgrims (Cort, 1990).²⁶

Jaina interest in travel also led to the creation of travel guides such as the Vividhatirthakalpa, a 14th-century text that mapped the history and significance of major Svetambara pilgrimage sites in Gujarat. This volume, containing information on over forty sacred places, testifies to the widespread popularity of pilgrimage among the Jaina community and the importance of such networks for connecting members and disseminating knowledge (Cort, 1990).²⁷

²⁵ Kolff, D. H. (2002). *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Vol. 43). Cambridge University Press. pp 14-18

²⁶ Dhawan .M.S.(1934)Vividhatirthakalpa of Jinaprabhasuri. Part 1 , volume 1 Bhartiya Vidhya Bhavan ' page 124-127

²⁷ Cort, J. E. (1990). Twelve Chapters from the Guidebook to Various Pilgrimage Places, the Vividhatirthakalpa of Jinaprabhasuri. *The Clever Adulteress and Other Stories. A Treasury of Jain Literature.* 'page 248-249

Wealthy Jaina merchants further supported pilgrimages by providing facilities for pilgrims at major shrines. For instance, on Girnar, the Vaghela minister Tejahpala constructed a luxurious complex, including a fort, monastery, drinking station, temple, and garden, demonstrating the deep connection between pilgrimage and social status among Jainas (Cort, 1990).

This period also saw the consolidation of Hindu pilgrimage circuits around sacred sites like Prabhas (Somanatha temple), Dvaraka, Dakor, and Shamlaji. These circuits offered devotees opportunities to connect with their faith and seek blessings from deities. During the reign of the Caulukya dynasty (942-1242 AD), Saivism flourished in Gujarat. This period witnessed the construction of numerous Shaiva temples, many of which became prominent pilgrimage centers. The grand Somanath temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, attracted devotees from all corners of India, solidifying its position as a major pilgrimage site (Sheikh, 2008). Other notable temples, like the Rudramahalaya in Patan, also emerged as important pilgrimage destinations, fostering a vibrant culture of devotion and travel within Gujarat.

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However, the 15th century witnessed the rise of Vaisnava bhakti, which led to the transformation of several existing pilgrimage sites into Vaisnava centers by the 16th century. The Dankapura Mahatmya, a local tirthamahatmya, narrates how the image of Ranachodaji was enshrined in the Dankor temple only in 1556, highlighting the process of Vaisnavisation of existing sacred spaces (Rangarajan, 1990).

This period also saw the emergence of Dvaraka as a major Vaisnava pilgrimage site, with the construction of the Narayana Sarovar temple in Kacch further enriching the landscape of Vaisnava pilgrimage. Additionally, a new circuit of 'popular' devotional pilgrimage developed around sites like the Bahucharajl temple, catering to the needs of devotees seeking healing and fertility blessings (Rangarajan, 1990).²⁸

The 13th to 16th centuries in Gujarat witnessed a profound transformation in the practice of pilgrimage. From its early association with Jainas to the rise of Vaisnava bhakti and the emergence of new pilgrimage circuits, this period saw the development of a complex and multifaceted system of pilgrimage that continues to shape religious life in the region today.

²⁸ Rangarajan, H. (1990). *Spread of Vaiṣṇavism in Gujarat up to 1600 AD: (a study with special reference to the iconic forms of Viṣṇu)*. Somaiya Publ. 187-190

7. Other cults, healing and medicine

The period between 1200 and 1600 AD witnessed a significant rise in the worship of the Mother Goddess, particularly among pastoralist communities in Gujarat. This devotion manifested primarily through the veneration of Sakti, the divine feminine energy, who appeared in various forms. Many pastoralist clans, like the Cauhans and Jadejas, pledged allegiance to martial mother goddesses like Asapura Mata, seeking her protection in battle and guaranteeing success in general (Cort, 2001). Others venerated deities like Khodiyar and Sikotar.

Bahucara, located in north Gujarat, emerged as a crucial translocal site for Sakti worship. This pilgrimage destination attracted diverse groups, especially Rajputising pastoralists and bards, who participated in a burgeoning pilgrimage network established from the 15th century onwards (Hegde, 1986).²⁹ Animal sacrifice formed an integral part of the rituals performed at many of these shrines. Asapura Mata, for instance, demanded a buffalo sacrifice from the Jadeja rulers of Kacch.

The 13th century saw the first appearance of allusions to Sakti worship in Sanskrit poetry, most notably in the Devi Mahatmya. The Caulukya royal poet Somesvara made references to Sakti in two of his works, the Surathotsava and the Kirtikaumudi (Dundas, 2002). By 15th-century Srdhara's translation of the Candi tale of the Devi Mahatmya into Old Gujarati as the Devikavitta, the link between Sakti and royal authority had become even stronger. There are strong connections between Sakti worship and the evolution of the garba, a traditional dance with a poetic metre.

From the time of the Guptas until the fourteenth century AD, the area between the Punjabi cities of Multan and Saurashtra in Gujarat was home to a thriving sun worship. Orissa and this area that includes southern Punjab, Sind, Rajasthan, and Gujarat were the principal sites of sun worship in India (Shah, 1974).³⁰ The sun temples at Modhera in northern Gujarat and Somanath, Than, Dhamlej, and Chorvad in Saurashtra attest to the sun cult's pervasiveness in Gujarat.

Gujarat is home to several examples of composite pictures that date back to the fourteenth century. Rangarajan (1990) and Majamudāra (1965)³¹ both provide examples of such representations, which unite the solar deity Surya with Narayana and, in one instance, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and Surya. The religious beliefs and practices of Gujarat throughout this time are shown here in all their complexity and evolution.

8. Sect and religion in the sultanate

²⁹ Hegde, R. V. (1986). Jainism in South India. Karnataka University p.p.189-192

³⁰ Shah, Umakant Premanand. (1974). Jaina-rājya Gujarat: (1200-1573). L.D. Institute of Indology.p.p.237-239

³¹ Majamudāra, M. R. (1965). Cultural history of Gujarat: from early times to pre-British period. (*No Title*).page no 237

In Gujarat, religious preachers faced the challenge of converting a frontier region populated by diverse pastoralist groups. This period witnessed conflicts between Isma'ilis and Nath or Saivite yogis, highlighting the competition for converts and the patronage of Caulukya monarchs. However, there were also links and concordances between these groups, as evidenced by their shared veneration for figures like Dattatreya (Shastri, 1979). Furthermore, Isma'ilis capitalized on existing Vaisnava traditions among pastoralists by associating their Imam with the Kalki avatara of Vishnu, demonstrating their adaptability and syncretic approach (Moir & Shackle, 2013).³²

The complex and fluid nature of pastoralist clan politics in pre-15th century Gujarat created fertile ground for sectarian competition. Marriages, alliances, and conquests led to intricate networks of religious affiliation. Individuals and groups could switch allegiances or form temporary alliances based on political expediency, constantly reshaping the religious landscape (Elliot, 2021).

The proliferation of sectarian shrines at sites like Girnar exemplifies the vibrant religious marketplace of this period. Such clusters were often located along trade routes, reflecting the link between religious activity and economic prosperity. However, this growth also highlighted the competitive nature of sectarianism, with each group vying for attention and resources (Elliot, 2021).

Over time, sects that initially relied on millenarian rhetoric to attract militant pastoralists gradually lost their edge as they became more prosperous and settled. The Satpanth Isma'ilis, for example, ceased active proselytization after the death of Imam Shah in 1512. This marked the beginning of a decline in sectarian competition and a stabilization of the religious landscape (Elliot, 2021).

The Gujarat Sultanate played a significant role in stabilizing the religious landscape. By settling nomadic communities and ensuring safe trade routes, they provided an environment conducive to the growth of established religious institutions. Regularized trade also allowed mercantile communities to offer sustained patronage to various sects, reducing the need for aggressive competition (Elliot, 2021).

The 15th century witnessed the rise of Vaisnavism and Sufism, fueled by the stabilization of the religious marketplace and the flourishing of Bhakti traditions. This period saw the emergence of notable Vaisnava figures and the establishment of influential Sufi orders, marking a significant shift in the religious landscape (Elliot, 2021).

While the 15th century saw a decline in sectarian competition, it did not disappear entirely. Patronage remained a crucial factor, with religious groups vying for the support of influential figures. Additionally, competition for prestige and the desire to elevate the importance of specific shrines continued to fuel certain rivalries (Elliot, 2021).

³² Shahstri H.G. (1984). Gujarat no rajkiya and sasnkrutik itihās volume 6 Biritish kal B.J. Institute of education page 385

The politics of the Sultanate were intrinsically linked to religion in several ways. Firstly, patrons of all levels, from the Sultan to regional lords and merchants, supported various religious activities to maintain the stability of their power base. Secondly, social groups like the Patidars used their patronage of specific cults to assert their social and political standing within the Sultanate (Elliot, 2021).³³

9. Haveli sampraday(pushtisamapraday)

The Sampradaya originated in the 15th century in northern India, namely in Rajasthan, and quickly expanded to Gujarat. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the practice extended to neighboring princely realms in northern India, where it received ongoing support from Rajput kings. The schools of Vallabhacharya art flourished in Mewar, Kishangarh, Bundi, and Jaipur, with the addition of the works of eight bhakti poets known as astachap. A sectarian central office was founded in a hamlet, which was transformed into a sacred city known as Nathdwara (meaning "the gateway to Sri Nath"), and quickly gained popularity as a destination for religious pilgrimages.

Historians of theology have examined the Pushtimarg, also known as the Path of Grace, focusing on its origins in the Braj area during the late 15th century. They have paid attention to the socioeconomic circumstances surrounding its development. The religious literature, including Sanskrit studies, Braj Bhasha hagiographies, as well as religious poem-songs, have stimulated scholarly research in the fields of religion and literature. Scholars have shown interest in the historical context of the Pushtimarg sect, particularly its migration from Braj to the western part of India in the latter part of the 17th century, its challenges in re-establishing itself in the presidency of Bombay during the 19th century, and its subsequent development into a transnational community in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Pushtimarg sect's elaborate system of temples and Krishna icons, such as Shri Nathji at Nathdwara, overseen by hereditary leaders, along with their well-known customs regarding seva (service), have attracted the attention of historians of art and anthropologists. These scholars have focused on the sect's visual arts, musical heritage, and the economic aspects of their temples.

The pushti marg tradition places great emphasis on the function of Sri Nathji, an embodiment of Krishna, who manifests to followers via a distinct form of worship known as darshan. According to sectarian legend, Vallabha, who is considered one of the great instructors or acharyas of the Hindu religion, unearthed a buried figure of Sri Nathi, with just one arm visible above the surface. Vallabha identified the picture as that of Krishna and placed it in a sacred space, instituting a consistent ritual of devotion. He encountered several divine manifestations and formed a unique bond with the deity.

³³ Elliot, H. M. (2021). *The History of India: As told by its own Historians: Vol. I*. BoD–Books on Demand.p.p.332-342

Presently, following the Vallabhacharya custom, darshans take place in India at certain times throughout the day, with a particular emphasis on addressing the deity's immediate need. Bhajans, which are devotional melodies, are often performed with powerful surges of emotional emotion, characteristic of the bhakti tradition.

The Mandir (Haveli) of ShreeNathji and other havelis in Pushtimarg are the sacred locations where Shree Pushti Purushottam Shree Krishna dwells. The Haveli is partitioned into several parts. The essence and significance of each part are provided below concisely:³⁴

Nij Mandir is the sacred location where Shree Prabhu graciously reveals himself to devoted Bhaktas. Shree Thakurji resides in the devotee's heart, symbolized by the Sinhasan, the sacred seat where Shree Prabhu sits and blesses. Shree Thakurji is positioned in the lap of Shree Yashodaji in Sihasan. Nij Mandir embodies the essence of the original Vrindavan.

Bhog Mandir is located on the right side of Nija Mandir. This is the location where Shree Prabhu performs the bhog ritual. This is the essence or spirit of the home of Shree Nand-Yashodaji.

Shaiyya Mandir is situated on the left side of Nij Mandir. This is the location where Shree Prabhu rests after observing Shayana darshan. This is in accordance with the disposition of Nikunj, a devotee of Shree Swaminiji.

Nij Tibari is located in front of Nij Mandir. At this location, there are three windows that represent the spiritual qualities of Satvik, Rajas, and Tamas Bhaktajans.

ShaakGhar is the location where every kind of vegetable and fruit are thoroughly cleansed to be used as offerings for Shree Prabhu.

DudhGhar is the location where all the raw ingredients for Balbhog and Mangal Bhog are made. This information mostly pertains to dairy products.

JalGhar: In this place, the Jhariji, which is the water of Shree Yamunaji, is poured in a pot for Shree Prabhu. Furthermore, the ShankhNaad (three Times) (Blowing the conch) is performed only at this location throughout the morning (before to awakening Shree Prabhu) and at Utthapan. The Shankha, also known as the Conch, represents the essence of the Vedas. The Shaankh Naad is only performed anywhere the Nidhi swaroops are present.

³⁴ Elliot, H. M. (2021). *The History of India: As told by its own Historians: Vol. I*. BoD–Books on Demand, pp.473-480

ShaankhNaad is not performed in Vasihanav's residence. The ShankhNaad is performed three times with the devotion of Shree Yamunaji, Shree Swaminiji, and Shree Chandravaliji.³⁵

Phool Ghar is the location where the flowers are gathered and the garland for Shree Prabhu is assembled. The flowers symbolize the embodiment of affectionate hearts of devoted followers of Shree Prabhu in Vraj. The flowers are imbued with the divine essence of Shree Swaminiji, Shree Chandravaliji, and Shree Lalitaji. The Mukhiyaaji of Phoolghar embodies the manifestation of Shree Swaminiji. The needle used to construct the garland is made from the essence of the musical notes produced by the flute of Lord Krishna. The thread symbolizes Nishkaam Prem, which refers to selfless devotion for Shree prabhu. Garlands are made from a variety of flowers. The yellow blooms are imbued with the divine essence of Shree Swaminiji. The color white represents Shree Chandravaliji, the color red represents Shree Lalitaji, the color dark represents Shree Girirajji, and the color light blue represents Shree Yamunaji.³⁶

PaanGhar is the location where beetle leaves and spices are combined to create the 'Paan' for Shree Prabhu. 'Paan' symbolizes the affection of Shree Yashodaji towards Shree Prabhu, and in Nikunj Leela, it represents the divine nectar of Shree Swaminiji.

GehnaGhar: The repository for clothing, jewelry, and sacred adornments of Shree Prabhu. The text refers to the significance or essence of Shree Raval and Barsana.

The central courtyard of the Haveli is called Kamal Chowk, named for the lotus design that is shown in the courtyard, symbolizing the divine dance of Maharaas. This represents the essence of 'Vraj'. The Lotus situated in the center of this courtyard is a Lotus with 8-16-32-64 petals. Vraj is considered a sacred location where Shree Prabhu engages in heavenly activities, symbolized by the lotus. Vraj is characterized as a Lotus with 56 petals, and Shree Krishna dwells in its center. Shreemad Goswami Shree Vallabhji Maharaj, the son of Shree Yadhunathji, conducted the Vraj Yaatra on the 12th day of Shukla Bhadarva in V.S. 1752. During this pilgrimage, he provided a detailed account of the 56 petals of the Vraj Lotus, including their locations and associated offerings.

³⁵ Majamudāra, M. R. (1965). Cultural history of Gujarat: from early times to pre-British period. (*No Title*), pp 437-439

³⁶ Majamudāra, M. R. (1965). Cultural history of Gujarat: from early times to pre-British period. Popular prakashan pp 345-348

Dol Tibari is located on the left side of Kamal Chowk. The term "Tibari" refers to a window. This location is referred to as 'Dol Tibari' due to the celebration of festivals such as Dol Utsav and Hindola. This is with the divine presence of Shree Girirajji.

DudhGhar and Gau Khirak are situated on the right side of Kamal Chowk. DudhGhar refers to a dairy where milk is processed, while Gau Khirak is a shelter for cows.

Haathi Pole: The exits (Dwars) from the Haveli are situated beyond the Kamal Chowk. This is not the ultimate departure from the haveli. Vaikuntha is the abode of Vishnu Narayana. Two elephants are shown on each side of Dwar. These elephants keep the trunks in their mouths and indicate the need to silently meditate on Shree Prabhu and await the divine sight of Shree Prabhu.

Sih Pole is the name given to the area that follows Hathi Pole. Two lions are shown on each side of Dwar. The standing lions represent the essence of Rigveda and Yajurveda. The lions that are sitting there are Samveda and Atharvaveda.

The process of entering the temple involves nine phases, known as Navdha Bhakti, which the devotee must do. These steps represent the nine different forms of devotion that the devotee must cultivate in order to enter the temple.

Nagar Khaana refers to the area located outside the mandir where Demigods, Kinnaris, and Gandharvas engage in musical performances using instruments such as Dundubhi and Nagara. Additionally, Toran decorations are also hung at this entrance.³⁷

Further, Gujarati havelis originated in the 16th century. Gujarati havelis are often constructed using a fusion of Hindu and Islamic architectural elements. Gujarati havelis, in the past, served as the residences of wealthy merchants, investors, and respected families. These constructions represented their social status and wealth. These houses served not only as homes, but also as centers for social meetings and cultural activities. Havelis were often used as venues for hosting weddings, festivals, and other significant occasions. Havelis served as both residential abodes and hubs of cultural and commercial activities.

The architectural style of Gujarati havelis is an enduring and appealing form of art that merits conservation. These architectural marvels exemplify the profound historical significance and cultural diversity of Gujarat.

Havelis originated as residences for Muslim kings in the Indian Subcontinent and later gained significance as essential architectural elements in urban settings during the Mughal era. While Havelis have its roots in Indo-Islamic

³⁷ Majamudāra, M. R. (1965). Cultural history of Gujarat: from early times to pre-British period. Popular prakashan pp 367-369

architecture, the presence of multi-level residences and enclosed courtyards in the area may be traced back as early as 3300 BCE. Courtyards are a prevalent characteristic of traditional dwellings on the Indian subcontinent, with ancient instances reaching back to the Neolithic era, regardless of whether they are grand residences or rural farmhouses. However, these structures use architectural designs that are distinct from the conventional Havelis that were created under Muslim rule, using a fusion of indigenous and Islamic traditions. Homes on the Indian subcontinent follow a traditional design where a central courtyard, known as a chowk, serves as the focal point for all family activities. In addition, the courtyard functions as a lightwell, facilitating the ventilation of the home in the hot and arid conditions of the area.³⁸

In the medieval era, many Vaishnava groups in Gujarat, under the rule of the Mughal Empire and Rajputana kingdoms, used the name "Haveli" to describe their temples. Over time, the word "haveli" became associated with urban residences and grand homes owned by wealthy merchants.

10. Conclusion

The religious spaces of Gujarat between 1200 and 1600 AD were more than just places of worship. They served as social, cultural, and economic centers, shaping the lives of individuals and communities. By interpreting their architecture, historical context, and inscriptional evidence, we gain a deeper understanding of the religious landscape of Gujarat during this period, highlighting its rich diversity, complex cultural exchange, and enduring impact on the region's identity. The 12th to 16th centuries witnessed a significant rise and subsequent accommodation of Jainism in Gujarat. Jainism influenced political policies, social practices, and economic activities. While facing challenges under the Delhi Sultanate, the community maintained its faith and continued to contribute to the cultural landscape of Gujarat.

The 15th century witnessed a transformation of Gujarat's religious landscape, marked by a transition from competition to coexistence among various religious groups. The Sultanate played a crucial role in this process by fostering stability and promoting trade. Despite the persistence of certain rivalries, this period laid the foundation for the diverse and vibrant religious tapestry of modern Gujarat.

³⁸ Daftary, F. (1992). *The Isma'ilis: Their history and doctrines*. Cambridge University Press. pp 372-374

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