

Shankaracharyas

- **About: Shankaracharya** (teacher of the way of Shankara), is a **religious title** used by the heads of the **four cardinal mathas or peeths** believed to have been established by **Adi Shankara (c 788 CE-820 CE)**.
 - According to tradition, they are religious teachers who belong to a **line of teachers** going back all the way to Adi Shankara himself, however, **historical evidence regarding the same is scarce** before the 14th century CE.
- **Mathas:** The four mathas are in **Dwarka (Gujarat), Joshimath (Uttarakhand), Puri (Odisha), and Sringeri (Karnataka)**.
 - They serve as **religious shrines, temples, libraries, and residences**. They play a crucial role in preserving and propagating Shankara's tradition.
 - There is little historical evidence for the existence of these mathas prior to the **14th century CE**, when the **Vijayanagara kingdom** began to patronise the Sringeri matha.

Adi Shankara

- **About: Adi Shankara or Adi Shankaracharya** was an **8th-century Indian philosopher and theologian**, considered one of the most influential figures in the history of Hinduism
 - He is believed to be born in **Kalady village in Kerala**.
 - Initiated into studies by **Govindacharya**, Shankara travelled extensively, challenging philosophical traditions, and **establishing mathas**.
- **Key Contributions:**
 - **Systematized Advaita Vedanta:** Provided a framework for understanding the **non-dualistic nature of reality**.

- **Illuminating Hindu Scripture:** Authored 116 works, including commentaries on **Upanishads, Brahmasutra, and the Bhagavad Gita.**
- **Promoted Bhakti movement:** Emphasised the importance of **devotion and surrender to God**, paving the way for later devotional movements.
- **Major Works/Commentaries:**
 - **Bhashya Granthas:**
 - Brahma Sutras
 - Isavasya Upanishad
 - Kena Upanishad
 - Katha Upanishad
 - Prasna Upanishad
 - Mundaka Upanishad
 - Mandukya Upanishad
 - Mandukya Karika
 - Bhagavad Gita
 - **Prakarana Granthas:**
 - Vivekachudamani
 - Aparokshanubhuti
 - Upadesahasri
 - Swatma Nirupanam
 - Atma bodha
 - Sarva Vedanta Sara Samgraha
 - Advaita Anubhuti
 - Brahma anuchintanam

- Sadachara anusandhanam
- **Hymns and Meditation Verses:**
 - Sri Ganesa Pancharatnam
 - Ganesa Bhujangam
 - Subrahmanya Bhujangam