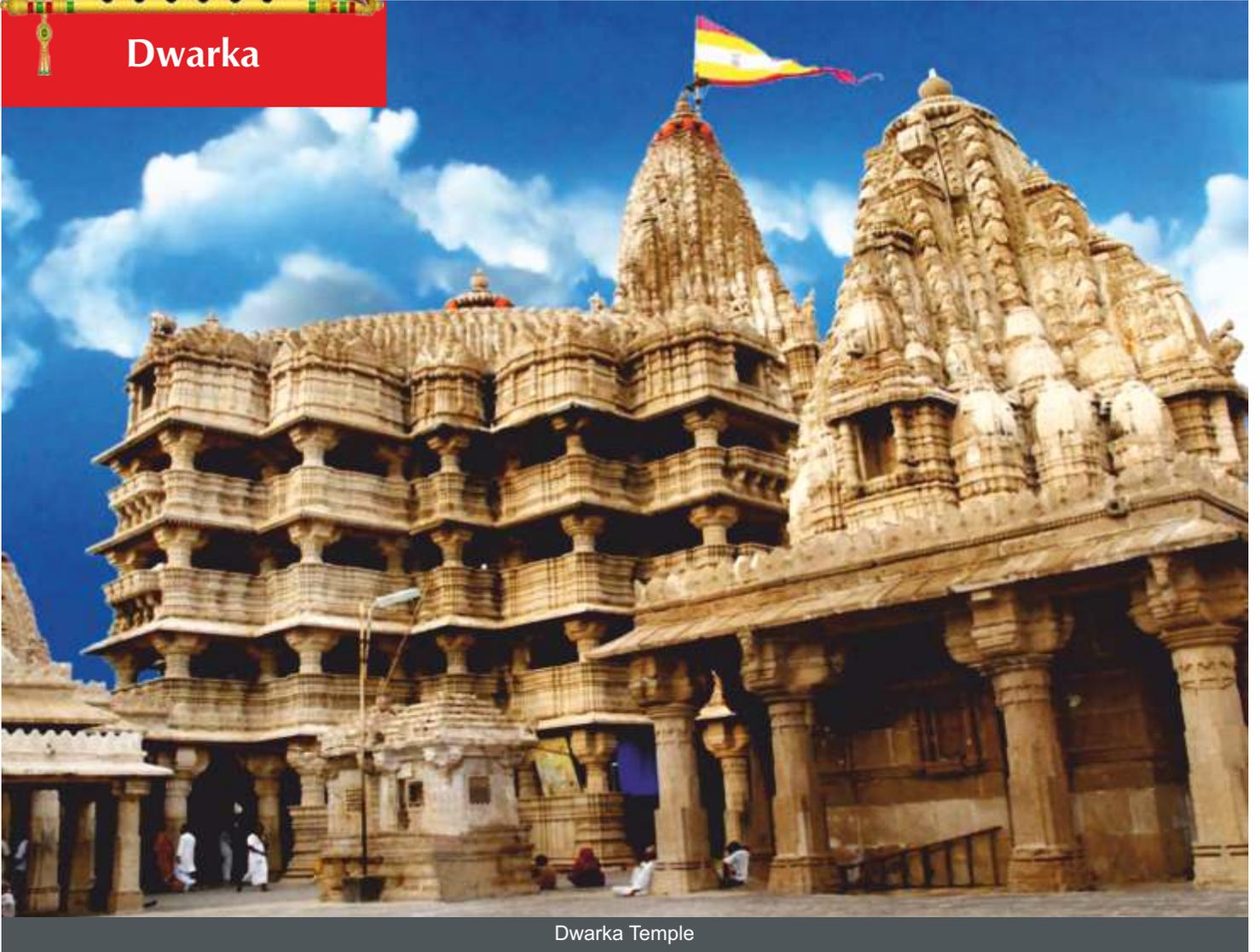




## ॐ Saptapuri & the Char Dhaams

### Dwarka



Dwarka Temple

One of the seven holiest cities of India, Saptapuri Dwarka—also called Suvarna Dwarka (Golden Dwarka)—is located on the edge of the Kutch Peninsula, facing the Arabian Sea, in Jamnagar, Gujarat. A renowned pilgrimage destination, Dwarka, formerly called the Gateway to Western India, was an important sea port. One of the four original Maths founded by Adi Shankaracharya is in Dwarka. Both Shri Ramanujacharya and Shri Madhavacharya visited this place.

It used to be the ancient kingdom of Lord Krishna and the first capital of the state. Archaeological excavations indicate that Dwarka is built on four former cities. Much of

the present town was submerged by the rising sea levels. There is evidence to suggest that the city was a large port at least as far back as the 15th century B.C.

Saptapuri is the name given to the seven sacred cities associated with Hinduism in India. These seven holy cities are also referred as Sapta Moksha Puris and Seven Tirthas. The general belief is that by visiting these cities one escapes from endless cycle of births and deaths and attains 'moksha.' Saptapuri is therefore also referred along with Char Dhaams as 'mokshadayika.'

The sacred cities in the Saptapuri are Kashi, Kanchipuram, Haridwar, Ayodhya, Ujjain,

Mathura and Dwarka. Kashi is also known as Varanasi and is located in Uttar Pradesh. . Ayodhya and Mathura are in Uttar Pradesh. Kanchipuram is in Tamil Nadu. Haridwar is also known as Mayapuri and is in Uttarakhand. Ujjain is also known as Avantika and is in Madhya Pradesh. Dwarka is also referred as Dwaravati and is in Gujarat.

Dwarka is an ancient city. According to the Puranas it was built about 5,000 years ago by none other than Lord Vishwakarma. No wonder, the place finds mention in the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the

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Skandpurana. It is believed that the present city of Dwarka is the seventh city, as Dwarka was destroyed and rebuilt six times before.

The sacred place of Dwarka has been attracting visitors since long. Many renowned personalities that include, among others, Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanuja,



Narsinh Mehta, Mirabai, Kabir and Nanak had visited the place at one time or the other. These well-known people, by their blessed presence, added much value to the already sacred place of Dwarka that even now continues to attract visitors from all parts of India.

Ancient legends of Dwarka tell that the holy city was long ago entirely swept away by a great wave of water. This legend, disregarded by contemporary historians and archaeologists, has recently been given credence by findings of the new science of inundation mapping, which produces accurate models of ancient shorelines at specific dates. The legend has been given further support by oceanographic studies which have proven the existence of submerged temple structures off the coast of Dwarka.

One of India's oldest and most venerated pilgrimage sites, Dwarka's archaeological and historical background is shrouded in mystery. Mythologically, Dwarka - or Dwaravati as it is known in Sanskrit - was the site chosen by Garuda, the Divine Eagle, who brought Krishna here when he departed from Mathura. Krishna founded the beautiful city and lived there for the remaining years of his life until he died (according to legend) in 3102 BC. However, scholars confer that the oldest parts of the Jagat mandir temple may only date to the reconstructions of the Gupta period in 413AD.

In the 7th century the sage Shankaracharya



Lord Dwarkadhish

established four great monasteries in the cardinal directions of the country (Sringeri in the south, Puri in the east, Joshimath in the north, and Dwarka in the west). This emphasis on Dwarka further increased its importance as a pilgrimage destination. The original temples were destroyed during the 11th century by Muslim armies; frequently rebuilt, they continued to be attacked by the Muslims through the 15th century.

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Rear View of Dwarkadeesh Temple

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Besides being a Sapta Puri, a Dhama, and a Shankaracharya Mutt, Dwarka is also visited by large numbers of pilgrims because of its association with the great bhakti saint Mira Bai. One of India's most popular saints, Mira Bai renounced her splendid life as the wife of a powerful 16th century king to dedicate her days to the worship of Lord Krishna. Mira Bai followed the spiritual path known as Bhakti Yoga,



### Dwarka

which is characterized by a devotional love of God, Krishna visited Mira Bai to eat, sing, dance and play with her. Mira Bai lived the final years of her life in Dwarka and there wrote to Krishna her immortal poems of love.

#### Attractions

**Dwarka Dheesh Temple:** The pride of Dwarka is the wonderful Dwarka Dheesh



Dhwaja Aarohan

Temple, also called the Jagat Temple. The beautiful temple has five storeys and is believed to have been built by Sambha, the grandson of Lord Krishna. The Dwarka Dheesh Temple has two imposing gates—Swarga Dwar and Moksha Dwar. The Swarga Dwar is used for the entry purposes and the Moksha Dwar is used for the exit purposes by the pilgrims.

Built in Chalukya architectural style, the

Dwarakadeesh temple has a history of 2500 year old. The revered masterpiece was made in honor of Lord Krishna also worships Sathybhama Devi, Subhadra, Balarama and Revathy, Jambavathi Devi, Vasudeva, Rukmini Devi and Devaki. The five storied temple with 60 roof columns can only be entered through Swarg Dwar after taking a dip at the Gomti River.

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*Bet Dwarka - This is supposed to be the place where Krishna lived. This is the place where Krishna used to reside and this is the place where Lord Krishna met his friend Sudama and blessed him, there is a Peetha(Seat) where Lord Krishna met Sudama. The temple also has the main Dwarkadish diety which was believed to have been made by Krishna's chief Queen Rukmini and in which Meera bai merged and disappeared from the material world. There are boats available from Okha Jetty from where people are ferried to the Island which is approximately 30 Kms from Dwarka.*

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In the middle of the town is Dwarkadheesh temple. The five storied temple is built on 72 pillars. The temple spire is 235 ft. high. From the temple domes waves a multicoloured flag decorated by 84 feet long - Lord Krishna's great grandson Vajranabha who is said to have built the original temple of palace. The sanctum of the temple dates back at least 2,500 years. There are two entrances to the temple the main entrance is called Swargadwara. Outside this doorway are 56 steps that lead to the Gomati River. The main deity in this temple is Lord Dwarikadheesh on the centre avtar. To the right of the main deity there is a temple having the deity of Lord Baldev Ji. The temple to the left of the main deity hosts a big deity of Pradyumora and a small deity of Aniruddha, the son and grandson of Lord Krishna.

### Dhwaja Aarohan

Dwarkadheesh temple is also known for its 52 yard long Dhwaja or flag. Devotees call it Dhwajaji or Shriji Dhwajaji. It is probably the longest flag in the world and it is hoisted four times a day. The Dhwaja is usually made of silk though there have been flags cast in gold as well. One can get a dhwaja from shops around the temple.

The entire process from buying dhwaja to raising it on the temple cost around Rs 10,000. It includes dakshina to gugal Brahmins. There is a heavy rush to offer dhwaja and it's all booked for the next two years.

Other key temples at Dwarka are Trikarnji Temple, Kalyanrai Temple, Patrani Temple, and Durvas Temple.

**Dwarka Peetha:** Dwarka Peetha—also called Sharada Peetha—is one of the four dhams (shrines) of India founded by Adi Shankaracharya, the others being Sringeri, Puri and Jyotimath.

**Bet Dwarka:** This is supposed to be the



Rukshamanee Temple

place where Krishna lived. This is the place where Krishna used to reside and this is the place where Lord Krishna met his friend Sudama and blessed him, there is a Peetha (Seat) where Lord Krishna met Sudama. The temple also has the main Dwarkadish deity which was believed to have been made by Krishna's chief Queen Rukmini and in which Meera bai merged and disappeared from the material world. There are boats available from Okha Jetty from where people are ferried to the Island which is approximately 30 Kms from Dwarka. Here, Harappan and Roman antiquities have been discovered. Besides, it is the place where Lord Vishnu had killed the Demon Shankharsura.

### Rukshamanee Mandir

Rukshamanee Mandir is dedicated to the beloved wife of Lord Krishna, Devi Rukmani. Among all His 16,108 wives, Devi Rukmani was Lord Krishna's favourite. The Rukshamanee Mandir, which is also known as Rukmani Temple, features varied paintings of the 12th century on its walls. These paintings capture the time spent by Lord Krishna and Devi Rukmani.

The temple is situated about 1.5 km from the main town, on the Okha highway. It is located on the banks of Bhagirathi River, which can be seen while travelling to Bet Dwarka. Due to the curse by Rishi Durvasa

to Devi Rukmani, this temple is placed away from the main Dwarkadish Temple in the town. Tourists can travel to this temple by local buses, auto rickshaws or by foot.



There are many myths & legends surrounding Krishna & Dwarka. Given below is an excerpt from "Dwarka – Krishna's Dham by the Sea" by Subhadra Sen Gupta. She was born in Delhi and holds a master's degree in history and has been writing since college. She specializes in historical fiction / non-fiction, travel writing, detective and ghost stories as well as comic strips. Subhadra Sen Gupta has published over twenty-five books for children and adults.

It all began when Krishna and his brother Balarama defeated and killed Kansa, their uncle and evil king of Mathura who had usurped the throne from his own father. Unfortunately, this meant that Krishna and Balarama made an enemy of Jarasandha, the powerful king of Magadha. Two of

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Jarasandha's daughters had been married to Kansa and so Jarasandha took a vow that he would not let Krishna live in peace. Krishna was a great king, wise and benevolent and there was happiness and prosperity in his kingdom that angered the bitter Jarasandha even more. He attacked Mathura 18 times and was defeated every time by Krishna, but Jarasandha refused to give up. Krishna was confident he could defeat Jarasandha again ...but years of conflict had exhausted his people and peace had fled from Mathura. Then the danger increased when Jarasandha's ally, Kalayavahan, the king of the Yavanas decided to attack Mathura from the west exactly when Jarasandha was gathering his army for the 19th invasion from the east.

Krishna, a supremely pragmatic king, now chose to move away from this never-ending conflict. He wanted to avoid any more bloodshed and felt his subjects deserved to be free from this perpetual state of war. Therefore, he led his people across the land on a long exodus to the western coast of Saurashtra where he built Dwarka, a new kingdom by the Arabian Sea. The myths say



The Yadavas battle each other at Dwarka



that Krishna and his people were guided to Dwarka by the divine bird Garuda, the mount (vahana) of the Lord Vishnu. Krishna's choice for the location of his capital was strategic as a ring of hills protected Dwarka on one side and the sea on the other three... In fact, Dwarka never faced an attack by Jarasandha.

Soon Dwarka became a busy port and a prosperous kingdom. Krishna filled his city-fortress with magnificent palaces and gardens. The Mahabharata has many descriptions of this magnificent ancient city. However, one must remember that Dwarka was built by a king who was in retreat and so in Gujarat Krishna is worshiped as Ranchodji because of his flight from Mathura to Dwarka. Ran means battle and chod is to leave and Ranchodji is one who left a battle.

... Krishna's last days were darkened by hopelessness and tragedy. Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas, had cursed him that just as she had to face the death of her sons, Krishna, too, would see the end of all that he had worked to build. And this terrible curse now came true. As he watched in horror, his beloved Dwarka became a decadent city where the men of his Yadava clan became steeped in debauchery.



Spot where Lord Krishna left for heavens Patan Prabhas near Somnath Temple, Gujarat

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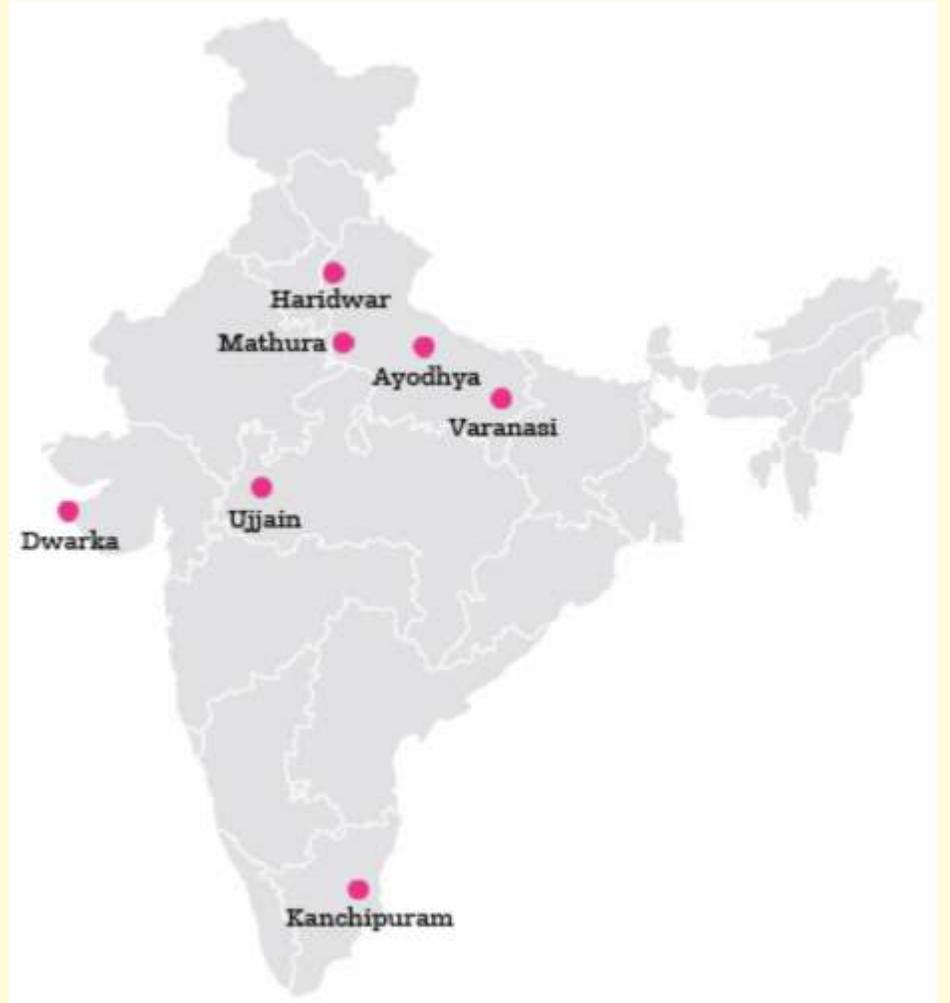
Balarama and Krishna has to ban drinking of wine. However, when they allowed the serving of wine during festivals in Prabhas Patan (near Somnath temple) his clansmen began to kill each other in a drunken brawl.

K.M.Munshi in his book "Krishnavatara" describes this final destruction of a once great clan. "At that very sacred place, as Fate would have it, the Yadavas lost their judgment and drank the highly intoxicating sweet beverage Maireyaka by the filtrates of which the reasoning faculty is completely lost. When the arrows were being exhausted and the bows got broken and their weaponry was finished they pulled out



and clenched into fists the eraka grass that grew abundantly on the shore as weapons. And lo! The eraka grass when they held in their fists became adamant like hand iron bars which they struck their adversaries. When forbidden by Krishna, they turned against him and attacked him."

After Krishna's son Pradyumna and grandson Aniruddha were killed before their eyes, Krishna and Balarama withdrew into the forest of Prabhas Patan where Balarama breathed his last. Krishna's charioteer Daruka came in search of his master and Krishna ordered him to hurry to Hastinapur and request Arjuna to come and save the defenceless women and children of Dwarka from his enemies. Then Krishna fell to the arrow of a hunter who mistook him for a deer. The most complete of the avatars of Vishnu rode to heaven and was merged into the radiance of God. With Krishna's death, his kingdom also came to an end as a



### The Many Tirtha Yatras

*There are many pilgrim circuits in Hinduism connected to various deities. These are the most sacred and ancient ones*

*Over the centuries Hindu pilgrims have developed many routes and journeys that meet their spiritual needs. These pilgrimages or tirthayatras are often connected to the god or goddess they venerate the most. There are ancient paths for the worshippers of Lord Vishnu or Lord Shiva, the Devi or even the banks of a sacred river like the Ganges or the Narmada. Among the most sanctified are the seven Saptapuris, the four Chaar Dhaams of Lord Vishnu, the twelve Jyotirlingams of Lord Shiva and the fifty one Shakti Peethas of the Devi. There are hundreds of tirthas, here we give you information about the most popular ones.*

huge tidal wave rose from the sea and swept away the palaces of fabulous Dwarka.

The Bhagavat Puran says that Krishna had already predicted this end of Dwarka. Talking to his childhood friend Uddhava, he had said, "The clan (of the Yadavas) already

consumed as it is by the curse of a Brahmana will surely be exterminated by mutual infighting and the sea will overflow and submerge this city on the seventh day, when I am no more here" With Krishna's death the third of the Hindu ages, the Dvapara Yuga ends and the last age of Kaliyug is said to have begun. ■