

# What the Indians knew

Piero Scaruffi

Copyright 2018

<http://www.scaruffi.com/know>

## **Part II: Ancient India**

# What the Indians knew

**Piero Scaruffi 2004**

- Insert pictures of Asian Art Museum
- See Chhauni museum
- See Delhi museum

# What the Indians knew

- Rig-veda (1500 BC)
  - Beliefs of the Indo-Europeans
  - 1028 hymns to a pantheon of gods
  - Written in Sanskrit (“perfect”, “artificial” language of the elite vs Prakrit, the “natural” languages of the masses)
  - 10 mandalas
  - Hymn: exhortation + praise + request, the praise describing the mythology of the deity
  - Polytheism: gods are anthropomorphic, immortal and benign (except Rudra)

# What the Indians knew

- Rig-veda (1500 BC)
  - Polytheism
    - Solar gods (Adityas): Varuna (god of the cosmic order) is the supreme god, his brother Mitra (son god), Surya (sun god) and his wife Ushas (the dawn), etc
    - Gods of the air: Indra (god of war, later becomes more popular than Varuna), Rudra, etc
    - Gods of earth: Agni (the fire god), Soma, etc
  - Asuras and Devas
    - Asuras deities of moral phenomena (e.g. Varuna)
    - Devas deities of natural phenomena (e.g. Indra)
    - Later: Devas" angelic and "Asuras" demonic

# What the Indians knew

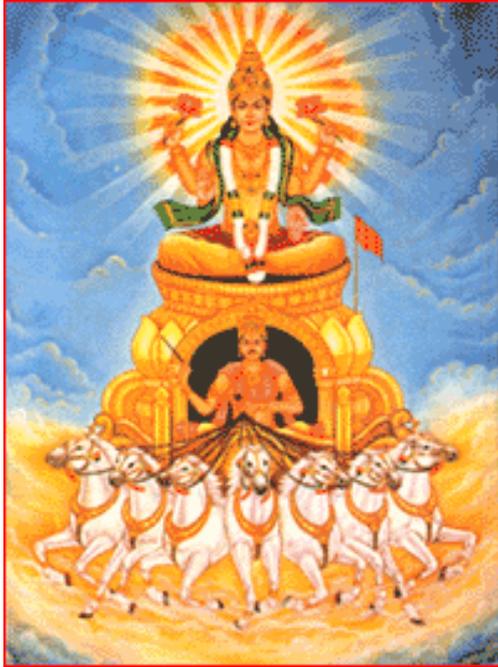
- Rig-veda (1500 BC)
  - Remnants of Dyaus, the original sky-god of the Indo-Europeans (replaced by Varuna)
    - Dyausa Pita is the Sky Father, divine consort of the Prithvi and father of Agni, Indra and Ushas
    - Dyausa Pita and Pritvi Mata are one divine entity, the Dyavaprthivi

# What the Indians knew

- Rig-veda (1500 BC)
  - Deities as vehicles of the force (of the ultimate self-controlling logic of the universe)

# What the Indians knew

- Rig-veda (1500 BC)
  - Surya



Indra (Mathura, 2nd c AD)

# What the Indians knew

- Rig-veda (1500 BC)
  - Sacrifice, prayer and ritual to please the deities
  - Aiming for a life of **material pleasure** (a utilitarian contract between the gods and the humans)
  - Three goals of human life: artha (material success), dharma (righteous social behavior), and kama (sensual pleasures)
  - No rebirth: you live on Earth and then in Yama's underworld
  - A person is a body, an asu (the life principle) and a manas (the mind).

# What the Indians knew

- Rig-veda (1500 BC)
  - Several contradictory creation myths (creation by fecundation of primordial waters, creation by dismembering of the giant Parusa/Purusha, creation by the One, creation by Visvakarman, creation by impregnating the mother Earth, i.e. goddess Prithivi, by the Dyausa Pita by way of rains, Tvastr, the "first fashioner", who created Earth and Sky)

# What the Indians knew

- Rig-Veda
  - Purusha sukta - hymn 10.90:
    - Purusha is the primeval thousand-headed and thousand-footed giant from whose body the world and the varnas (castes) originated.
    - Purusha emanated Viraj, the female creative principle, from which he was reborn
    - The self-sacrifice of Purusha created the castes: the Brahmins were made from Purusha's mouth, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet
    - The Moon was born from his mind, the Sun from his eyes, the heavens from his skull
    - Indra and Agni emerged from his mouth.

# What the Indians knew

- Rig Veda (1500 BC)
  - Hymn I-164-46: Sat is the primeval principle of the world
  - Hymn X-29: An absolute preceded existence (sat) and non-existence (asat)
  - The tenth mandala is highly philosophical
  - Brahmins eat meat (in the Mahabharata XIII:114:11 it is considered folly)

# Creation Hymn from the Rig Veda (Translation by V. V. Raman, University of Rochester)

*Not even nothing existed then  
No air yet, nor a heaven.  
Who encased and kept it where?  
Was water in the darkness there?  
Neither deathlessness nor decay  
No, nor the rhythm of night and day:  
The self-existent, with breath sans air:  
That, and that alone was there.  
Darkness was in darkness found  
Like light-less water all around.  
One emerged, with nothing on  
It was from heat that this was born.  
Into it, Desire, its way did find:  
The primordial seed born of mind.  
Sages know deep in the heart:  
What exists is kin to what does not.*

*Across the void the cord was thrown,  
The place of every thing was known.  
Seed-sowers and powers now came  
by,  
Impulse below and force on high.  
Who really knows, and who can  
swear,  
How creation came, when or where!  
Even gods came after creation's day,  
Who really knows, who can truly say  
When and how did creation start?  
Did He do it? Or did He not?  
[continues on next page]*

# Creation Hymn from the Rig Veda (Translation by V. V. Raman, University of Rochester)

*Only He, up there, knows, maybe;  
Or perhaps, not even He.*

# Creation Hymn X.90 from the Rig Veda

*Dismemberment of cosmic being Purusha  
by the gods and origin of the castes*

- Time, seasons, animals are born*
- Brahmins originate from its head*
- Ksatriya originate from its arms*
- Vaishyas originate from its thighs*
- Shudra originate from its feet*

# What the Indians knew

- The Vedas
  - Veda means “knowledge/wisdom” in ancient Vedic
  - Beliefs of the Indo-Europeans
  - All Vedas were reserved for male priests of the upper (Brahmin) caste
  - Not written down but handed down orally from father to son (jealously guarded secrets)

# What the Indians knew

- The Vedas
  - Yajur-Veda (1000 BC): rites of sacrifice
    - The will of the gods is not as important as performing the correct ritual (I.e. the priest is more important than the gods...)
    - Greatest of sacrifices: Ashvamedha (horse sacrifice, an elaborate ritual)
  - Sama-Veda: religious hymns
  - Atharva-Veda (900 BC): magic spells
    - Gods are less important than the appropriate spells
    - Prajapati supreme creator of the universe

# What the Indians knew

- The Vedas
  - Brahmanas (900 BC): priestly sacrificial rites in prose
    - Concept of rebirth
    - Karma determines rebirth
    - Salvation as avoidance of rebirth
    - Salvation achieved through rituals
  - Sutras continue the approach of the Brahmanas: one's desires can be fulfilled through a correct ritual (the gods are negligible)

# What the Indians knew

- The Vedas
  - Brahmanas (900 BC): Aitareya, Kauṣītaki, Pancaviṃśā, Chāndogya, Śatapatha and Gopatha
  - Sacrificial rituals are the core theme of Brāhmaṇic literature
  - Main sacrificial offering: animals
  - The world itself was created by an act of sacrifice:
    - “And when he had emitted the creatures, he (Prajāpati) rose up on high and departed to that world, where that (sun) shines; for up to then there existed no other that was worthy of sacrifice. The Gods began then to offer him (Prajāpati) in sacrifice” (X: 2, 2, 1).
    - “Prajāpati gave himself to the Gods. The sacrifice became verily theirs. Sacrifice is therefore the food of Gods. When he gave himself to the Gods, he emitted an image of himself, which is sacrifice... By sacrifice he purchased himself from the gods” 18 (XI: 1, 8: 2-4).

# What the Indians knew

- A natural religion
  - Mesopotamia gods: protectors of the city-state
  - Indo-Aryan gods: forces of nature

# What the Indians knew

- Sources of the Vedas
  - Indo-European elements
  - Indo-Iranian elements (eg, Vedic god Varuna similar to Zoroastrian god Ahura Mazda)
  - Dravidian elements

# What the Indians knew

- The Vedas
  - Burial of the dead with the food and clothing that are needed in the afterlife
  - Human nature: physical body, ashu (the vital principle) and manas (consciousness, self and will)
  - Body, ashu and manas move to the afterlife
  - Divine justice is administered by the gods Yama, Soma and Indra, not by the law of karma
  - Two divine drinks: Soma for the immortal soul and Amrita for the immortal body

# What the Indians knew

- The Vedas
  - Division of time: 60 vipala make one pala, 60 pala make one ghatika, 60 ghatika (or 30 muhurta) make one day
  - In the Veda there is no name for the whole of India. Bharata refers only to the north of India, or at least a dynasty ruling the north of India
  - (In the Mahabharata: Bharata is the son of king Dushyanta and Shakuntala and conquers the whole of India. In Jain scriptures: Bharata conquers the whole Earth and the worlds above it)

# What the Indians knew

- The Vedas
  - Deities are not perfect (certainly not omniscient, nor omnipotent, nor infinitely good)
  - Coexistence of orthodoxy (philosophy) and orthopraxy (ritual) with preeminence of orthopraxy (of dharma): what matters is that you behave properly, not that you know the dogmas.
  - No concept of blasphemy: deities are funny beings, far from being perfect.
  - Manusmṛti: no punishment for offending deities, severe punishment for offending brahmins

# What the Indians knew

- Caste System
  - Already mentioned in the Rig-veda but most information about it comes from the British era
  - Indo-Aryan tripartite society: priest, warriors, farmers (plus slaves)
  - Social classes (varnas) of the Indo-Europeans: Brahmins/Brahmans (priests), Ksatriyas (warriors and princes), Vaisyas (trader), Shudras (peasants and servants, probably descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants)
  - Caste may have originated from a division of labor

# What the Indians knew

- Caste System
  - In practice a bewildering array of regional practices: Varna (the ideal caste system) plus Jati (the practical application, different in every region and probably fluctuating in time)
  - Thousands of jatis
  - A fifth caste: the untouchables or dalit
  - Women's varna is determined by male association

# What the Indians knew

- Caste System
  - Trivia
    - The untouchables/dalit are not in Manusmṛiti (16% of the population in 2012)
    - Vegetarians only at the top of the system
    - British India dominated by Brahmins but previous eras may have had different hierarchies
    - Many nomadic tribes (hard to classify in the caste hierarchy) that were settled only by the British

# What the Indians knew

- Caste System
  - Caste promotes social order
  - The person who obeys the caste's code of behavior in this life will be reborn into a higher caste in the next life
  - India is a continent with no peasant rebellions

# What the Indians knew

- Women
  - None of the goddesses comparable to even second-tier male gods, but some may be the original elements of Devi worship
    - Prthivi the earth (mother figure related to the male god Dyaus)
    - Usas the dawn (mother figure who rouses life and sets things in motion)
    - Aditi mother of the gods (**abstract** goddess, mentioned nearly eighty times in the Rig-Veda at no time as a consort to any of the gods)
    - Vac the speech (**abstract** goddess, she enables one to hear, see, grasp and then express in words the true nature of things)

# What the Indians knew

- Women
  - Mentioned, tolerated and even prescribed by the Vedas:
    - Child Marriage
    - Dowry
    - Bride-Burning (e.g., if the dowry is insufficient, about 5,000 yearly in the 1990s)
    - No Property
    - Sati/ Widow-Burning (upon the death of the husband)
    - No divorce
    - No re-marriage

# What the Indians knew

- Women
  - Women are forbidden to study the Vedas

# What the Indians knew

- Languages
  - Hindi
  - Telugu
  - Kannada
  - Tamil
  - Malayalam
  - Marathi
  - Gujarati
  - Punjabi
  - Bengali
  - Assamese
  - Oriya

# What the Indians knew

- Religions
  - Hinduism
  - Buddhism
  - Jainism
  - Islam
  - Christianity

# What the Indians knew

- The cow
  - The cow is the last stage of reincarnation before the reincarnation into human form
  - It takes 86 reincarnations to get there
  - If you kill a cow, you send the poor soul back to reincarnation #1

# What the Indians knew

- The horse
  - The noble animal of the Punjab lands

# What the Indians knew

- Brahmanas
  - Composed during the second urbanization (900-700 BC)
    - Rice instead of wheat
    - Water buffalo for agriculture
    - Iron age
    - Urban societies along the Ganges
    - The horse is reserved to the aristocracy

# What the Indians knew

- Brahmanas
  - Emphasis on sacrifice (activity of the priests)
  - Vedic gods downplayed
  - Fear of death (that was not relevant in the Vedas)
  - Prajapati: everything emanates from Prajapati, the primordial consciousness
  - Gods and humans are emanations of Prajapati
  - Shatapatha Brahmana (800 BC): the great flood (the flood that destroyed the Indus civilization?)

# What the Indians knew

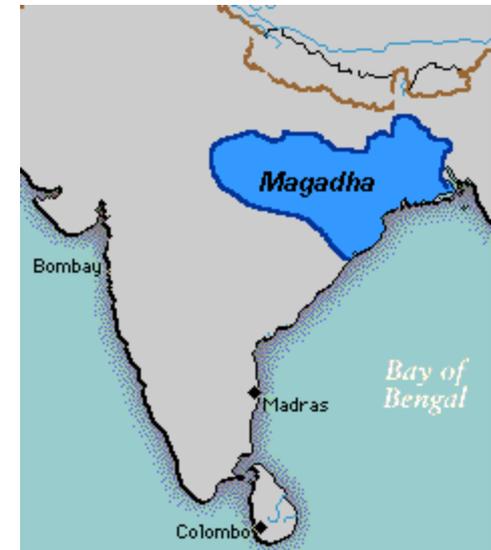
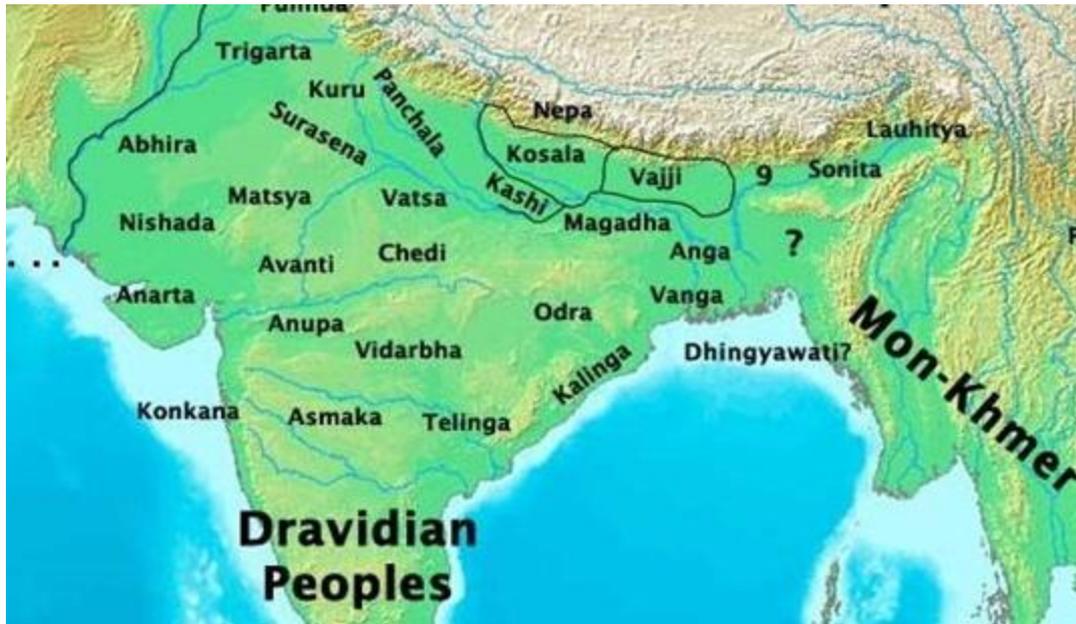
- Śulbasūtras (800 BC - 200 AD)
  - Mathematical appendix to the Vedas
  - Fire altars in different shapes to obtain favors from deities
  - Pythagorean theorem
  - Euclidean geometry
  - Square roots
  - Hindu numerals

# What the Indians knew

- Hinduism till 6th century BC
  - Monopoly of the Brahmins
  - Salvation can be attained only by secret rituals known only to the Brahmins
  - Basically, the Brahmins are the Hindu church
  - Indirectly, the Brahmins create a “rule of law” that prevails over the political rulers
  - (Hinduism = Sanatana Dharma)

# What the Indians knew

- India in 6<sup>th</sup> c BC
  - Main kingdoms of the eastern Ganges: Kosala and Magadha



# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - The oldest (8th c. BC?): Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (“Great Forest Text”) and Chandogya Upanishad (texts of the Chandogas, the priests who intone hymns at sacrifices)
  - Yajnavalkya (Videha kingdom in southern Nepal), legendary author of the oldest upanishads (cursed by Shiva, Brahma incarnated himself as Yājñavalkya)
  - The other core upanishads (5th to 1st c BC): Kena, Aitareya, Kaushitaki, Katha, Mundaka, Taittiriya, Svetasvatara, Isa, Prasna, Mandukya and Maitri
  - The longest: Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (369 verses)
  - Extant: more than 100 upanishads

# What the Indians knew

- Chandogya Upanishad
  - Three gunas of matter: sattva, rajas, tamas

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (“Great Forest Text”)
    - *“But they who conquer the worlds by means of sacrifice, charity, and austerity, go to smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the decreasing half of the moon, from the decreasing half of the moon to the six months when the sun goes to the south, from these months to the world of the fathers, from the world of the fathers to the moon. Having reached the moon, they become food, and then the devas feed on them there, as sacrificers feed on Soma, as it increases and decreases. But when this ceases, they return again to that ether, from ether to the air, from the air to rain, from rain to the earth. And when they have reached the earth, they become food, they are offered again in the altar-fire, which is man, and thence are born in the fire of woman. Thus they rise up towards the worlds, and circle around as before”*

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (“Great Forest Text”)
    - The ascetics who lived in the forest reach Brahman, i.e. go to heaven and stay there
    - The sacrificers (who follow the Vedic prescriptions) go to heaven but are then reborn
    - There is no definition of good and bad deeds
    - Note: a king teaches the doctrine of the two paths to a brahmin, not viceversa

# What the Indians knew

- Katha Upanishad
  - Nachiketa travels to the Otherworld, the realm of Yama
  - Yama explains to Nachiketa what happens after death
  - The sound “om” is the sound of Brahman
  - The same sound is also the sound of the atma
  - Atma survives death
  - The cycle of rebirths is due to the inability of the atma to become one with Brahman
  - Nachiketa is liberated from the cycle of rebirths

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - The metaphysical counterpart of the Veda (eg, the Brihadaranyaka is contained in the Yajurveda)
  - Philosophical meditation on the meaning of life and the nature of the universe, rather than mythology of gods
  - Pessimistic vision of the human condition: life is evil/sorrow
  - Union of the individual soul (“atman”) with the universal soul (“brahman”), rather than devotional acts

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - Reaction of the Ksatriyas against the Brahmins: the Upanishads are not exclusive to the Brahmins
  - End of the monopoly of the Brahmins over religion
  - Rebellion of the new urban class

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - Brahman: the absolute, the soul of the world
  - Atman: the divine within the self, the soul of the individual
  - Karma: moral determination of reincarnation
  - Samsara: endless cycle of death and rebirth, transience of ordinary life
  - Dharma: social and cosmic order
  - Dhyana: meditation
  - First formulation of the law of karma: Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (4,4,5)

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - Maya: the multiplicity of the world as an illusion of the senses
  - Moksha: liberation from maya and experience of the brahman
  - Yoga: a method for salvation, of union of brahman and atman, of experiencing the divine within the self
  - First formulation of yoga: Katha and Shvetasvatara Upanishad

# What the Indians knew

- Brahman
  - The ultimate cosmic principle
  - The first cause of the universe
  - The source of existence
  - Pure knowledge
  - Eternal, infinite, and conscious being
  - It is the subject, not the object, of thought
  - Brahman “is” the self (atman) of all beings

# What the Indians knew

- Brahman
  - Can only be described in negative terms (what it is not):
    - nirguna (without qualities)
    - nirakara (without form)
    - nirvishesha (without particularity)
    - nirupadhika (without limitations)

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - Salvation is liberation (moksha) from the illusory world (maya)
  - Moksha is achieved when the individual soul (“atman”) knows the universal soul (“brahman”)
  - The soul is divine
  - The order of the soul is a reflection of the order of the absolute
  - Thus understanding one’s self is understanding the absolute
  - Self-knowledge is knowledge of the absolute

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - All matter/energy is made up of three qualities (gunas) in increasing order of fineness:
    - Tamas (inertia): the grossness, that gives rise to form, to the three dimensions of space
    - Rajas (change): the quality that gives rise to movement or force
    - Sattva (purity): the finest quality, that gives rise to life or thought
  - Sattva and tamas are opposed to each other, while rajas is complementary to both

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - The creation is the interplay of the three gunas
  - Before Creation: the primal equilibrium of sattva, rajas and tamas
  - Creation: when the three gunas begin to interact and the process of evolution begins
  - After creation: tamas destroys an existing state while, simultaneously, Sattva creates a new state
  - Evolution is the simultaneous process of creation and destruction due to the three gunas
  - Rajas maintains a bond between the sattva and tamas

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads
  - An element of each quality is present in every object/event
  - The laws of nature are due to a combination of the three gunas
  - In the material world of the three gunas we react to objects and events
  - Only in enlightenment are the gunas completely transcended

# What the Indians knew

- Problem of evil
  - Right and wrong actions ("karma") increase positive and negative potential energy ("apurva", later also called "karma")
  - Karma causes apurva
  - Apurva (positive or negative energy) eventually is released and causes good or evil to the person
  - Misfortune is caused by prior wrongful deeds (is not only deserved but even required)

# What the Indians knew

- Problem of evil
  - Causality is a loop from the individual back to the individual
  - Nobody is an "innocent" victim (every victim is guilty of something done before or in a previous life)
  - Justification of the caste system (you are what you are because that is what you deserve)
  - Cosmic justice totally independent of gods
  - Pointless to try to improve one's lot

# What the Indians knew

- Suffering and Salvation
  - Wisdom is the realization that everything is suffering
  - But the realization of suffering does not lead to pessimism
  - It leads to salvation
  - The realization of suffering is the first step towards salvation
  - Salvation is liberation from suffering
  - Salvation is achieved by transcending the human condition

# What the Indians knew

- Suffering and Salvation
  - Salvation is an “awakening” in which one finally sees the truth
  - Nothing has changed in the world: it is the individual’s state of mind that has changed

# What the Indians knew

- Suffering and Salvation
  - No explanation for what originally caused the fall of humankind

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads/terminology
  - Atman, the universal self that undergoes a process of manifestation (vivarta) culminating with the achievement of Brahman
  - Brahman, the timeless one, the self of the universe, that alternates between a manifest state (multiplicity of forms, kalpa) and a nonmanifest state (potential form, pralaya)
  - Ananda: the bliss of being Brahman from which all beings come into existence

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads/terminology
  - Bhutas: bodily senses; also the constituents of the physical world (Akasha, Vayu/air, Agni/fire, Ap/water, Prithivi/earth)
  - Prana: the vital spirit that differentiates life from nonlife and that enables reincarnation
  - Paramanus: the infinitely small elementary constituents of the physical stimuli that cause the four sensations of temperature, color, flavor and odor
  - Akasha: the continuum in which physical phenomena happen and which causes the sensation of sound

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads/terminology
  - Indriyas: sense organs (jnanendriya that account for perception and karmendriya that account for action)
  - Manas: attention that selects stimuli and creates a conscious state
  - Vijnana or Ahamkara: a bundle of experiences, an “I”
  - The soul is the combination of prana, indriyas, manas and vijnana

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads/terminology
  - Mahat: similar to Kant's unconscious innate categories and to the Holy Spirit of Christianity
  - Asat, Maya, Avyatka or Avidya (and later Prakriti, Pradhana, Shakti): a principle of self-sacrifice by Brahman that is similar to the Logos of the Christians and that, by vibrating, originates the primary sound shabda; the principle by which purusha negates itself and achieves tamas

# What the Indians knew

- Upanishads/terminology
  - Karma: action
  - Dharma: duty, that depends on caste, age (four stages of life), sex (a woman's dharma is obedience to father, husband and son)
  - Samsara: cycle of rebirth, i.e. the mundane world, the world of becoming
  - Chakras: 12 centers of energy located in the body, each associated with a different kind of consciousness/ energy, a ladder leading to higher consciousness/ energy (defined in Shri Jabala Darshana Upanishad, Cudamini Upanishad, Yoga-Shikka Upanishad and Shandilya Upanishad)

# What the Indians knew

- Aranyakas (“jungle books” – 600-400 BC)
  - Rituals
- Shrauta sutras (500 BC)
  - Public rites of the Vedas
- Grihya sutras (300 BC)
  - Household rites

# What the Indians knew

- Ayurveda
  - Encyclopedias of medicine: Suśruta Saṃhitā and Caraka Saṃhitā (500 BC - 500 AD)
  - Five elements of the universe: Pṛthvī (earth), Jala (water), Agni (fire), Vāyu (air) and Ākāśa (Sky)
  - Seven elements of the human body: plasma (rasa dhātu), blood (rakta dhātu), flesh (māṃsa dhātu), fat (medha dhātu), bone (asthi dhātu), marrow (majja dhātu), and semen (śukra dhātu)
  - Health depends on balance of the dosas: vāta (air & space – "wind"), pitta (fire & water – "bile") and kapha (water & earth – "phlegm")
  - Panchagavya ("Five Products of the Cow"): milk, butter, curds, urine, feces

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Many different cosmogonies
  - The universe is a sphere centered on India, made of concentric heavens, hells, oceans, continents
  - The history of the universe is cyclic
    - from the golden age (Krita Yuga) to the present age (Kali Yuga) back to the golden age via fire and flood
  - Human life is cyclic (karma, samsara)
  - Brahma: the creator
    - Brahma: primordial being that originated a variety of gods and spirits
    - Unusually low-profile

# What the Indians knew

- Sectarian Hinduism
  - About 300 BC Vishnu and Shiva become more popular than the gods of the Rig Veda
    - Mahabharata includes a Hymn of the Thousand Names of Shiva
    - Oldest Shiva's statue: Gudimallam linga (3<sup>rd</sup> c BC)



Gudimallam linga (3<sup>rd</sup> c BC)

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Shiva
    - Terrible god
    - Dravidian origin (Rudra?)
    - God of ascetics and god of the phallus
    - Shiva beheaded his father, the incestuous Brahma, and was condemned to carry the skull until he found release in Varanasi
    - Shiva appeared on Earth in various human, animal, and vegetable forms
    - He performs a cosmic dance while the world is being destroyed

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Shiva
    - Shiva's phallus (linga) is the central shrine of temples and the personal shrine of households
    - Shiva does not interfere much with human affairs
    - Shiva identified with east and west
    - The Nandi bull is the vahana (vehicle) of Shiva (a Nandi faces the main shrine of every Shiva temple)
    - Kapalika sect carries skull to reenact the myth
    - Aghori sect are indifferent to pleasure or pain

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Vishnu
    - Benevolent god
    - Vishnu gave birth to the creator (Brahma)
    - Vishnu separated heaven and earth
    - Vishnu intervenes in human affairs
    - Dravidian origin (Krishna is dark skinned)
    - Vishnu the Sustainer and Shiva the Destroyer
    - Vishnu identified with north and south

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Vishnu
    - Many incarnations (ten avatars): The dwarf in the RigVeda, Krishna fights the antigods (asuras) and Rama fights the ogres (rakshasas), even Buddha (“Vishnu Purana”, 7<sup>th</sup> c), and Kalki (the only avatar that still has to come)
    - The Kali age begins when Vishnu becomes Buddha to fight the antigods, and the Kali age ends with the arrival of Kalki who will destroy the heretics

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Brahma
    - The creator
    - Trimurti: trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Devi
    - The “Goddess”
    - The prime mover, who commands the male gods to do the work of creation and destruction
    - Uma, the mother
    - Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu,
    - Parvati, the wife of Shiva (daughter of the Himalayas),
    - Durga, slayer of demons,
    - Kali, goddess of death,
    - Shakti, the female power (Lakshmi is Vishnu's shakti and Parvati is Shiva's shakti, and she is also Kali and Durga),

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Devi
    - Shiva's wife
    - Shiva and Devi are complementary aspects of Brahman
    - Good manifestations: Uma as 'light'; Parvati 'the mountaineer'; and Jaganmata 'the mother of the world'.
    - Evil manifestations: Durga, Kali, Chandi, Bhairavi
    - First appearance as Durga, a warrior

# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Durga
    - Originally Chandika
    - Devi Mahatmya देवीमाहात्म्यम् ("Glory of the Goddess") poem in the Markandeya Purana
    - A manifestation of the goddess Devi or Shakti
    - She was created by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and embodies their collective energy (shakti).
    - They created her to slay the buffalo-demon Mahisasura, whom they were unable to overcome.



# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Devi



Mother Goddess  
Chennai, 10th c



Parvati, 10th c  
(Metropolitan Museum)



Durga killing the bull,  
Mahamallapuram,  
7th c

Kali, 12th c  
(Delhi Museum)

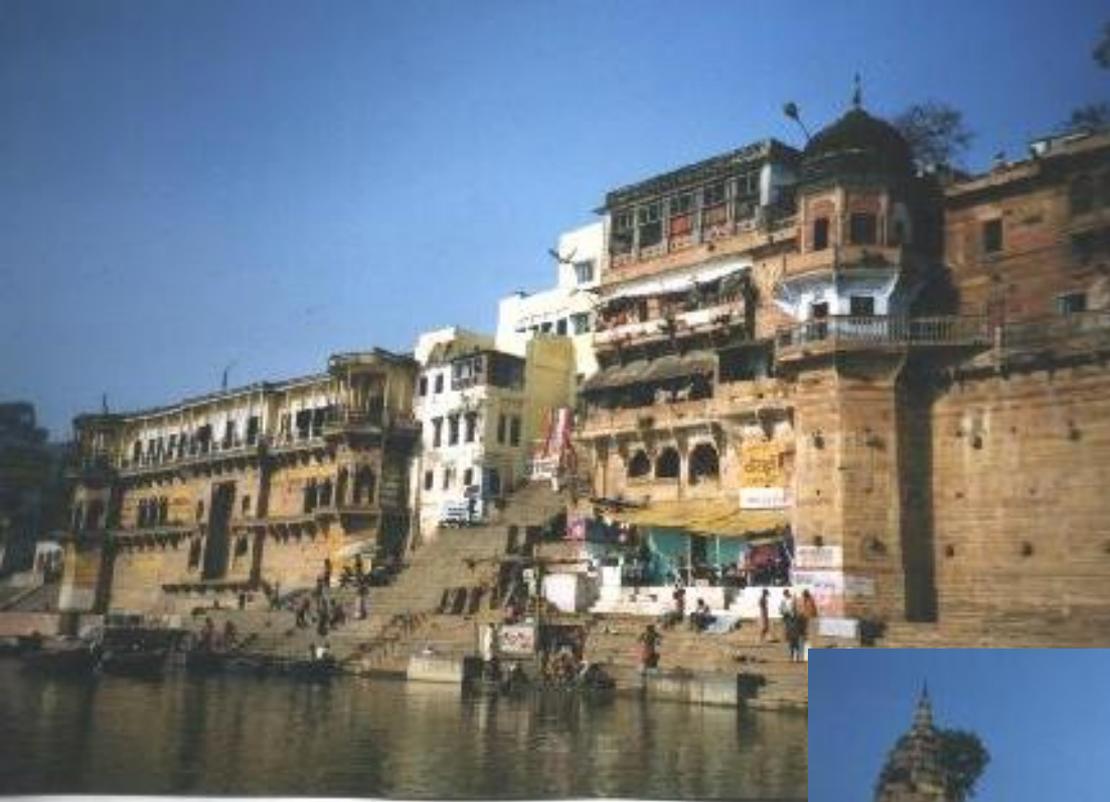


# What the Indians knew

- Hindu cosmogony
  - Devi

Sarasvati, Karnataka (13th c)  
(Art Institute of Chicago)





# Varanasi



# What the Indians knew

- Vedic India
  - Nothing is left in India of Vedic times: not a building, not an object, not a monument. If it weren't for the Vedas, that civilization would have vanished completely.

# What the Indians knew

- Shramana
  - Wandering ascetic individual who renounced the world to find salvation in spiritual meditation
    - Siddhārtha Gautama/ Buddha (Buddhism)
    - Vardhamana/ Mahavira (Jainism)
    - Vedic shramanas (scorned by the brahmins)
  - Liberation can be achieved by anybody irrespective of caste
  - Liberation is to be achieved by each individual, either by introspection or by following other individuals
  - The priest is replaced by the master
  - The cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra) is the cause of sorrow
  - Nirvana: the state of having escaped from the cycle of rebirth

# What the Indians knew

- Siddhartha Gautama (527BC)
  - born in Lumbini (Nepal)
  - enlightened in Bodhgaya
  - preached first sermon in Sarnath
  - died in Kushinagar

# What the Indians knew

- Siddhartha Gautama (527BC)
  - Sakyamuni: "sage of the Shakya clan"
  - Budh: to be aware
  - Buddha: "the enlightened one"



# What the Indians knew

- Siddhartha Gautama (527BC)
  - Member of the warrior caste
  - Rebellion against the dogma (salvation through rituals) of the Brahmins
  - Preached in Prakrit (language of the commoners) not Sanskrit (language of the Brahmins)
  - Monastic (“underground”) movement
  - No divine birth, supernatural powers or miracles
  - Discontinuity with Vedas (rejection of rituals, gods and priests)
  - Continuity with Upanishad (same pessimistic view of the human condition)

# What the Indians knew

- Siddhartha Gautama (527BC)
  - Karma is not action but only causation
  - Karma is what persists after death
  - Life is damnation (sorrow replicated via karma)
  - Salvation does not lie in eternal existence but in escape from the illusion of the self
  - Nirvana (state of complete liberation) via practice and enlightenment
  - Nirvana = no more rebirths
  - Salvation lies in eternal death, not eternal life

# What the Indians knew

- **Siddharta “Buddha” Gautama (527BC)**
  - **No atman: no enduring consciousness, consciousness is a substance not a being**
  - **Personal identity through time does not consist of a self that is continuously reborn but of a continuity of karma**
  - **Dharmas (elements of existence): the components of a cart exist, but the cart itself is only a concept and does not truly exist**
  - **Each dharma is relative to every other dharma, each dharma is caused by another dharma (conditioned existence)**
  - **Nothing exists for any period of time (no duration to dharmas, dharmas are momentary)**
  - **Each moment is an entirely new existence**

# What the Indians knew

- **Buddha (527BC)**
  - **Decay is inherent in all complex things**
  - **Suffering (existential suffering) is inherent in all living beings**
  - **“Only suffering exists, but no sufferer is to be found. Acts are but there is no actor” (from the Visuddhimagga)**

# What the Indians knew

- **Buddha (527BC)**
  - **No god: no Brahman**
  - **Brahman replaced by "righteousness" (dharma), living a life of moral and ethical standard (the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path)**
  - **Gods are not creators of the universe, and cannot influence human life. They are subject to the same cycle of rebirth. Enlightenment is actually possible only for humans.**
  - **No transmigration: souls do not migrate from this life to the next one (there is no self)**

# What the Indians knew

- Buddha (527BC)
  - Nirvana
    - Four-fold negation of nirvana (it is not true that we exist or do not exist, and it is not true that we both exist and not exist, and it is not true that we neither exist nor do not exist; i.e. nothing can be said about nirvana)

# What the Indians knew

- Buddha (527BC)
  - Equality of all beings (no castes)
  - Love: *“Hatred cannot be defeated by hatred. Hatred is only cured by love”* (Dhammapada/ Yammakavagga 3)

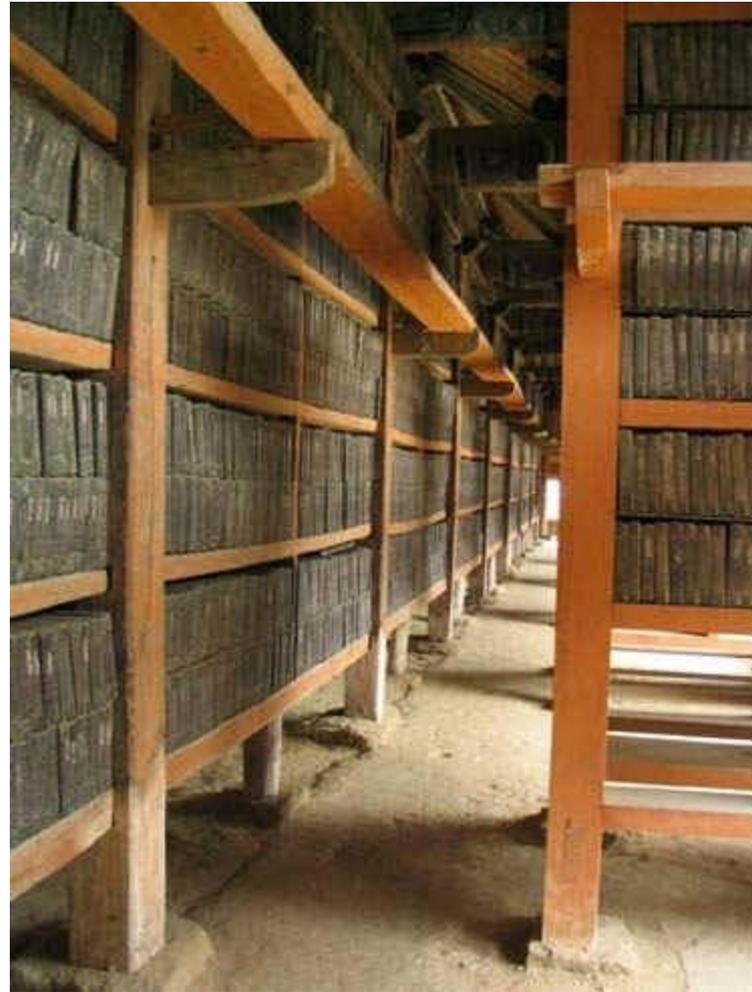
# What the Indians knew

- Buddha (527BC)
  - Eternalists: the soul is eternal
  - Annihilists: nothing is eternal and nothing is connected
  - The Third Way: the soul is not eternal, but all events influence other events

# Buddhism

- Theravada/Hinayana Buddhist scriptures (“Tipitaka” or “Pali canon”):
  - Codified in the second half of the 1st century BC in the Pali dialect of the Prakrit language
  - Transmitted orally by Buddha's disciples
    - Ananda (Buddha’s servant): Buddha’s sutras/sermons (Sutra pitaka): over 5,000 sutras
    - Vinaya “basket” (pitaka) of monastic rules: 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns
    - Abhidharma pitaka of philosophical speculation (300BC -100 AD): five treatises due to scholars (not by the Buddha)
    - Suttas: pitaka of stories and sayings (including the Jatakas, parables of Buddha’s previous lives)

# Buddhism



Tripitaka engraved on 80000 woodblocks between 1237 and 1248  
(Haeinsa Temple in Kayasan park, South Korea)

# Buddhism

- Four Noble Truths:
  - Life is suffering (“dukkha”)
  - All suffering is caused by ignorance (“avidja”) of the nature of reality and by attachment to Earthly belongings (“tanha”) that results from ignorance.
  - Suffering can be ended by overcoming ignorance and attachment.
  - The path to the end of suffering is the Eightfold Path that leads to wisdom (“panna”) and enlightenment (“bodhi”): right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right-mindedness, right contemplation
  - (Parallel with Indian medicine: first define the disease, then discover the cause, then present the cure)

# Buddhism

- The ultimate goal of the path is release from the human condition, i.e. from ignorance, from greed, and from suffering (to attain nirvana)
- Nirvana is infinite consciousness
- Nirvana can be attained by cultivating four attitudes (“palaces”):
  - love (kindness)
  - compassion (for negative events)
  - joy (for positive events)
  - fairness
- Only monks can achieve nirvana
- Five commandments (do not kill, steal, fornicate, take drugs, lie)

# Buddhism

- Existence consists of five categories/aggregates (skandhas): matter (including the body), sensations/feelings, concepts, mental activity/disposition to act, thoughts/spirit/awareness
- The five aggregates separate at death
- At each point in time an individual is a combination of the five skandhas. The combination changes all the time.
- The self (atman) changes continuously
- Denial of the atman (anatman)
- 12-step chain of events that causes the continuous repetition of the cycle of birth and death, each life's karma influencing the following one (pratityasamutpada, dependent origination)

# Buddhism

- Everything is conditioned by (constructed from) the five skandhas
- Except nirvana: nirvana is not conditioned

# Buddhism

- Meditation/mantra:
  - The mind changes all the time
  - The mind becomes the object of its thought
  - In order to become God, the mind has to focus on God
  - Each God is associated to a sound, a mantra
  - Concentrating on the mantra of God, the mind becomes that God (I.e., absorbs its power)
  - Same principle in Hinduism and Magic

# Buddhism

- Difference with Hinduism:
  - No atman: no enduring consciousness, consciousness is a substance not a being
  - Salvation lies in escape from the illusion of the self: nirvana
  - "Only suffering exists, but no sufferer is to be found" (from the Visuddhimagga)
  - No brahman
  - Very difficult to do the right thing (requires meditation and practice)
  - Monasteries and universities
  - Ability to create wealthy corporate institutions

# Buddhism

528 BC: Siddhartha Gautama achieves enlightenment

479 BC: at the first Buddhist council Buddha's teachings (Sutta) and the rules of monastic discipline (Vinaya) are codified

383 BC: the second Buddhist Council at Vesali chooses Hinayana over Mahayana

259 BC: king Asoka of India converts to Buddhism and sends out Buddhist missionaries to nearby states

250 BC: Buddhists carve the first cave temples (at Lomas Rishi)

247 BC: Asoka calls for the third Buddhist Council at Patna to codify the Buddhist canon of scriptures (Tipitaka)

246 BC: first Buddhist mission to Sri Lanka

200 BC: Buddhism spreads in central Asia

50 BC: Hinayana Buddhism (the Pali canon) spreads in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand

50 AD: Mahayana Buddhism spreads to Tibet, China, Japan

100 AD: the Pure Land sutra is composed

# Buddhism

350: Huiyuan founds Pure Land Buddhism in China

366: Buddhists begin the Mogao caves near Dunhuang in China

372: Buddhism is introduced in Korea from China

380: Buddhist monks carve two giant Buddha statues in the rock at Bamiya, Bactria (Afghanistan)

520: Bodhidharma travels to China and founds Chan (Zen) Buddhism

538: a delegation from Korea introduces Japan's emperor to Buddhism

560: Zhiyi founds Tendai Buddhism in China (centered around the teachings of the Lotus Sutra)

625: Shotoku Taishi adopts Buddhism and Confucianism as state religions of Japan

650: Vajrayana Buddhism (Tantrism)

750: Guru Rinpoche/ Padmasambhava converts Tibet to Buddhism

805: Saicho brings Tendai Buddhism to Japan

806: Kukai introduces the Shingon (Tantric) school into Japan

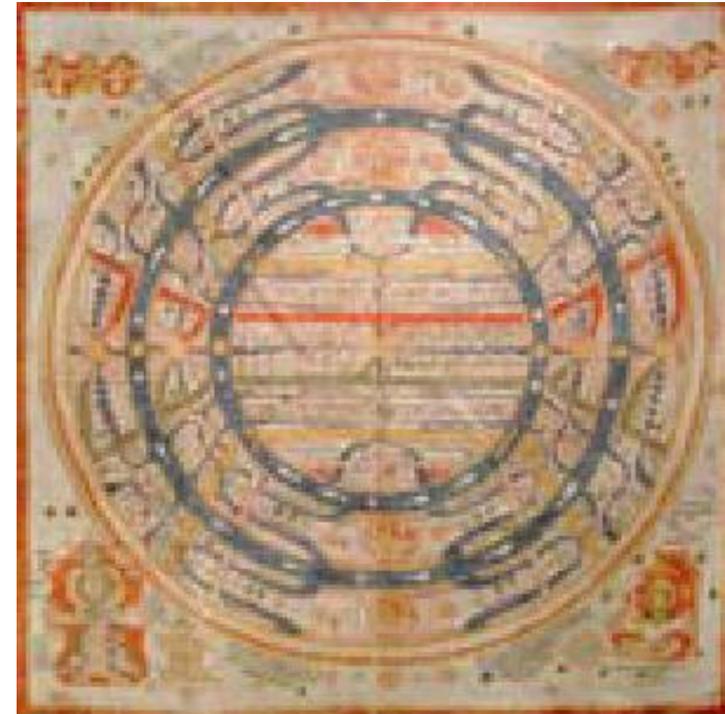
# Buddhism

Buddhism does not recognize the soul but practice nonviolence out of compassion for all living beings

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism (570BC)
  - Jina = liberator/ conqueror
  - Parsvanatha (8th c BC)
  - Vardhamana Mahavira (6th c BC)
  - Schism of 77 BC: Digambaras (naked monks) vs Svetambaras

Map of the world of mortals (Sam Frogg)



# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Buddha: the soul of the individual does not exist
  - Mahavira:
    - Panpsychism: everything has a soul (humans, animals, plants, objects)
      - Death by starvation is the most sublime death
      - The universe is the set of all souls
    - The soul of the individual (“jiva”) is the only thing that is eternal

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Both are anti-Brahminical (remove the need for the Brahmin to perform secret rituals)
  - Both belong to the caste of warriors kshatriya
  - Both open to women and all castes
  - But Buddha offers a Middle Way, whereas Mahavira does not compromise: liberation is much harder to attain
  - No earthly rewards from worshipping the Jain deities

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - The history of the world endlessly repeats itself
  - In each cycle 24 Jain prophets (Jinas) are born and spread the gospel
  - Mahavira is the 24th of the current cycle

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - A jiva undergoes an endless cycle of rebirths
  - The actions of a jiva cause it to become impure (as karma attaches to the soul)
  - Liberation/salvation (moksha), i.e. liberation from the cycle of rebirths, can be achieved by distancing from matter, so that the soul can get rid of the karma it has absorbed and no more karma can attach to it
  - In order to purify itself, the jiva must practice non-violence (“ahimsa”) and austerity (“tapas”)
  - Each jiva is responsible for its own purification/salvation

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - No god or universal soul
  - Perfect knowledge (kevala) is the goal
  - Syad-vada: any topic allows for 353 different valid viewpoints (there is no certainty, just "perhaps")
  - Kevala can be achieved through purification
  - Jiva (vital force that is in all humans, animals, plants and objects) and ajiva (atoms, space, time, motion, rest)
  - No difference between body and soul
  - Salvation by non-violence (including animals)
  - Salvation by self-starvation

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Jina = those who have conquered the suffering (duhkha) caused by attachment
  - Concepts of karma, rebirth and nirvana like in Buddhism
  - Path to liberation is ascetism (total renunciation) and meditation
  - But the soul exists and every being has a soul (jiva)

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Everything that moves has jiva: mountains, rivers, trees, rocks...
  - Each jiva has the qualities of caitanya (consciousness), sukha (bliss) and virya (energy)
  - Jivas dwell in the highest realm (the siddha loka) of the universe, above gods
  - Possibly originating from the Indus Valley civilization, whose seals seem to point to meditation and veneration of animals
  - Possibly the root of both Buddhism and Hindu Yoga
  - No creator god

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Svetambara sect: "Acharanga Sutra" (4th c BC) is the most ancient scripture
  - Digambara sect: "Mulachara" (2nd c AD)
  - Origin of the ethical doctrine of karma (which in Hinduism is codified only in the "Dharmasastras")
  - Karma is a physical substance that attaches to the soul and prevents ascent to the siddha loka
  - 14 stages to purification of increasingly strict monastic vows
  - Origin of the ethical doctrine of "amhisa" (nonviolence) which in Hinduism is only codified in the Mahabharata (XIII:125:25)
  - All life is sacred
  - Opposed to Hindu practice of animal sacrifice

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Four vows: ahimsa, satya (don't lie), asteya (don't steal), brahmacharya (no sex)
  - Actions in the world promote violence
  - Extreme opinions are always bad
  - Fasting to purge away negative karma
  - Jain nonviolence influences Buddhism and moves with Buddhism to China and Japan

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism vs Buddhism
  - 24 jinas, not just one Buddha
  - The 24th, Vardhamana Mahavira (6th c BC), also a member of the warrior caste like Buddha
  - Both nonviolent
  - Both rebel against the Veda practices and Brahmin authority
  - Buddha compromised with the Middle Way: Mahavira didn't compromise

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Rishabanatha (Adinatha)
    - identified by his flowing locks and the bull
    - depicted nude, a reference to his total detachment from the earthly world
    - the first of the twenty-four Jinas, or Jain deities, who crossed through the “torrent of rebirth”
  - Parsvanatha the 23rd jina, identified by a snake
  - Neminatha, identified by a conch

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Two orders: Digambara (“naked”) and Svetambara (“white clad”, traders and bankers)
  - Second council at Mathura (4th c)
  - Last council at Valabhi in Gujarat (6th c)
  - Pantheon of divinities: Ambika, Sarasvati, Sachika,

# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Originally in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh
  - The great famine of the 3rd c BC spreads Jains west and south
  - Mauryans protect Jains
  - Jains prosper under the Kushan (1st c AD) especially in the richest and most cosmopolitan city, Mathura (also the birthplace of Krishna)
  - Jains become merchants and bankers
  - Popular in Karnataka in the 4th c BC (supported from the 3rd c AD until the 14th c first by the Ganga dynasty and then by the Hoysala dynasty)
  - Popular in the Deccan (supported by the Rashtrakutas from the 8th c)
  - Prospering in the northern Gupta empire
  - Jain kings of Gujarat in the 8th c and 12th c and powerful ministers in the 13th c (Mt Abu era)

# What the Indians knew

- Pantheon of deities (6th c AD)
  - 24 Jinas (represented in only two positions: either sitting or upright like rockets)
    - Rishabanatha (the bull)
    - Parsvanatha (the snake)
    - Neminatha (the conch)
    - Mahavira

# What the Indians knew

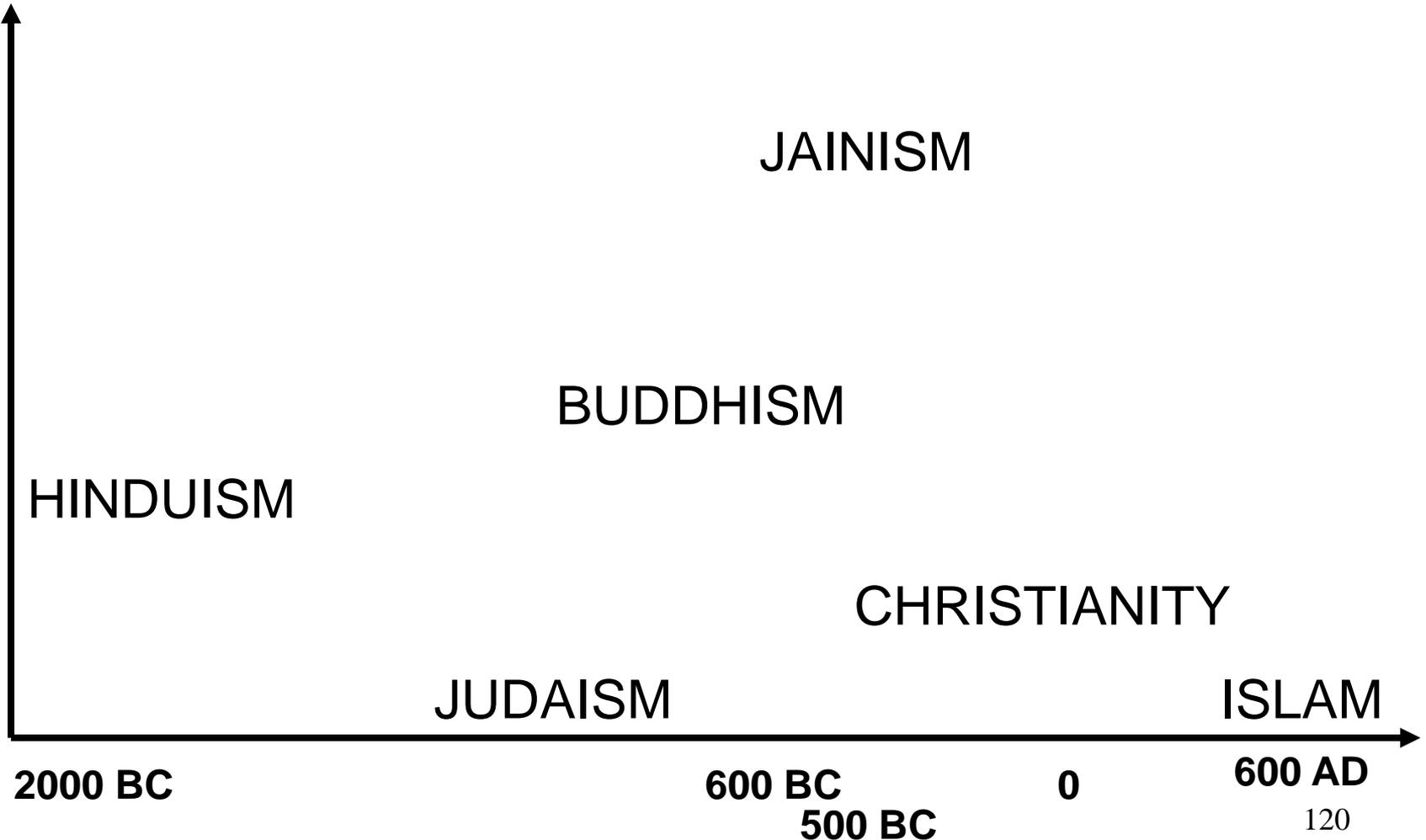
- Pantheon of deities (6th c AD)
  - Hinduist influence
    - Indra protects Mahavira
    - Ambika, mother goddess (riding a lion)
    - Sarasvati, goddess of knowledge (holding a book)
    - Lakshmi, goddess of good fortune
    - Ganesh
    - but only peaceful deities

# What the Indians knew

- Pantheon of deities (6th c AD)
  - Buddhist influence
    - Guardian deities
    - Yaksha
    - Yakshi, female yaksha (Padmavati, Chadresvari, Ambika, etc)
  - Tantric influence
    - Vidyadevi
    - Mahavidyas: 16 female tantric deities for magical incantations (vidyas)

# What the Indians knew

- **Respect for life**

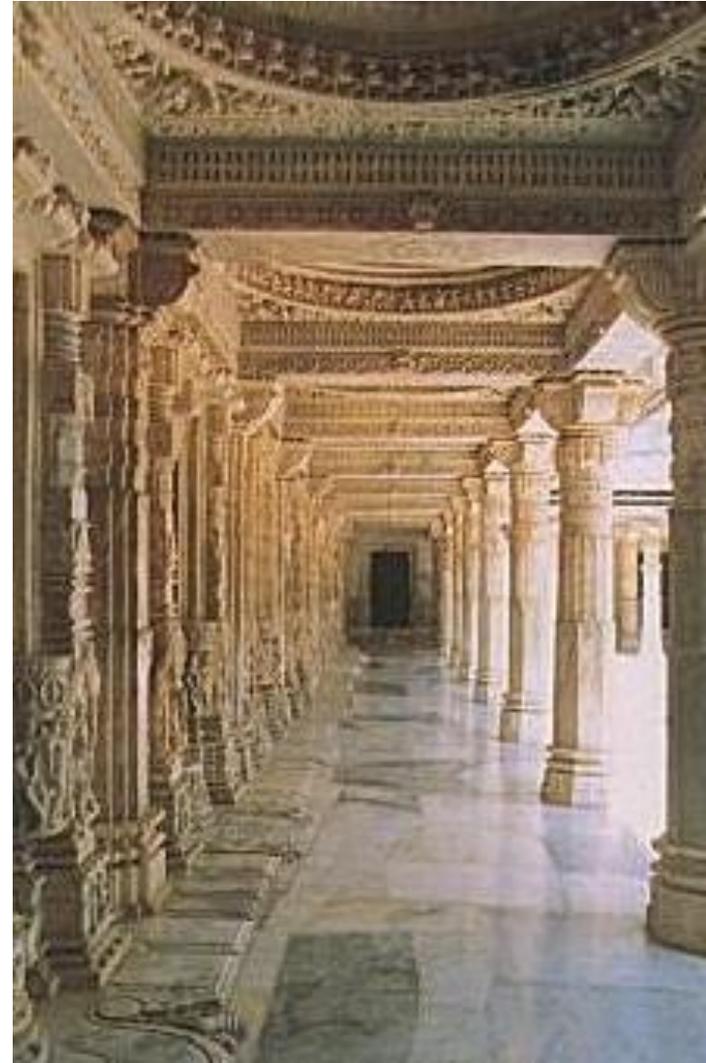


# What the Indians knew

- Jainism
  - Sanctuaries



**Mount Abu**



# What the Indians knew

- Jain Cosmology
  - The Jain universe is eternal, and it has neither creator nor destroyer.
  - The Jain universe is divided into two worlds: Lokakash, which is finite and contains all things (such as us), and Alokakash, which is infinite pure space and completely surrounds Lokakash.
  - Things come in six substances, or "dravyas", four of which are immaterial, including akasha (space) and kala (time). There is no time in Alokakasha. There is only space in Alokakasha. Akasha is curved. Things are made of a substance called "pudgala", which is matter and energy.

# What the Indians knew

- Jain Cosmology
  - Lokakash is in turn divided into three regions: upper, middle and lower.
  - The "Trashnali", represented as a horizontal band, joins all three regions. That is the place that living beings inhabit. The Trashnali is about 28,000,000,000,000,000 kms long, which is about 3,000 light years.
  - When i calculated this distance, i was somehow reminded of the two black holes that are located 3,000 light years apart in an extraordinarily bright galaxy called NGC 6240, which is about 400 million light years from Earth and was formed from the collision of two giant galaxies.

# What the Indians knew

- Jain Cosmology
  - The Trashnali is the part of the universe that is "inhabited". Since it contains many stars, planets and moons, Jains believe that life is not an exclusive of our planet. In fact, life is a fundamental property of the entire Trashnali.
  - Liberated souls live in the upper region of the universe, the Siddhashila. Damned souls live in the lower region of the universe. We and billions of other animals and plants live in the middle region, Manushyaloka, which is where the journey towards salvation takes place.

# What the Indians knew

- Jain Cosmology
  - Manushyaloka, in turn, consists of two and half continents, centered around Mt Meru, represented as a circle in the center of Jain diagrams.
  - All around the circle are parallel straight lines representing mountains that divide nations identified by rivers.
  - The region where humans reside is Jambudvipa.
  - It is encircled by a blue ring: Lavanasamudra, a sea.

# What the Indians knew

- Jain Art
  - See [www.scaruffi.com/museums/jain/index.html](http://www.scaruffi.com/museums/jain/index.html)

# What the Indians knew

- Age of Hindu ascetism (5th-3rd c BC)
  - Asceticism becomes widespread
  - Doctrine of the four ashramas/stages: brahmachari (celibate religious student); grihastha (married householder); vanaprastha (forest dweller); sannyasin (wandering ascetic).
  - Varnashramadharma: the duties of the four classes (varna) and the four stages of life (ashramas)

# What the Indians knew

- Code of Manu/ Dharma-shastra (1<sup>st</sup> c AD)
  - Norms not only for rites but also for daily life
  - Four castes
  - Chandala (untouchables)
    - Descendants of the union between a Brahmin (priestly class) woman and a Shudra man (slave class)
    - Forbidden to wash their underwears or their bodies
    - Fed only garlic and onions
    - Forbidden to draw water from rivers
    - Forced to live in awful sanitary conditions

# What the Indians knew

- Texts on dharma (3<sup>rd</sup> c BC – 1<sup>st</sup> c AD)
  - Dharma-sutras
  - Dharma-shatras
    - Code of Manu/ Dharma-shastra (1<sup>st</sup> c AD)

# What the Indians knew

- Sumati Bhargava's "Manu code" (170 AD)
  - 2685 verses
  - Four goals of Brahmanic life
    - Religious duty (dharma)
    - Wealth (artha)
    - Sex (kama)
    - Salvation (moksha)
  - Four stages of Brahmanic life
    - Student
    - Householder
    - Ascetic
    - Sage

# What the Indians knew

- Code of Manu (3rd c BC)
  - Women's rights
    - Vedas: They can even be deities
    - Ramayana and Mahabharata: Positive roles
    - Manusmṛti: Decline in the status of women

# What the Indians knew

- Vatsyayana's "Kama Sutra" (4th c BC – 2<sup>nd</sup> c AD)
  - 1250 verses in Sanskrit
  - Intended for women as well as men

# What the Indians knew

- Kautilya: “Artha-shastra” (2nd c AD): Machiavellian advice to the king

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - Samkhya
  - Nyaya
  - Vaisesika/ Vaisheshika
  - Purva-mimamsa
  - Royal Yoga
  - Vedanta

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 1. Samkhya
    - Oldest school (400 BC)
    - Ishvarakrishna (3<sup>rd</sup> c AD)
    - Atheism (no creator god)
    - Dualism: male purusha (spirit) and female prakriti (matter)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 1. Samkhya
    - Purusha: the self, the mind (infinite number of purushas)
    - Prakriti (Pra=first, Kri=to do) is the first cause (Matter, Nature, natural order of the universe)
    - Prakriti is the active (female) material principle and it is the actor of samsara (cycle of rebirth)
    - Purusha is the inert (male) spiritual principle and it is a mere spectator of samsara (it is conscious of samsara)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 1. Samkhya
    - Prakriti manifests itself in three gunas (inertia, change and purity) which constitute the phenomenal world
    - Originally the three gunas were in perfect equilibrium
    - Prakriti generates both the world of objective phenomena (tamas prevails) and the world of subjective phenomena (sattva prevails): a twofold development process generates a twofold world
    - The (external) world and the mind (internal world) are made of the same substance, the difference between them is one of degrees not of substance

# What the Indians knew

## – Samkhya

- The evolution of the world is due to the interaction between purusha and prakriti
- A self/purusha neither affects nor is affected by nature: it is a mere spectator, it creates consciousness of the samsara which is occurring
- Prakriti is both matter and mind. Purusha is the awareness of them. Both an object and its mental representation belong to the realm of prakriti: only the awareness of the mental representation belongs to the realm of purusha.
- Each purusha is isolated from the other purushas. Each purusha is an eternal and static monad.

# What the Indians knew

## – Samkhya

- Prakriti evolves, purusha is immutable.
- Lower animals have bodies and minds, but not awareness/purusha.
- There is no original creator, but there is a universal destiny/goal: prakriti will eventually dissolve and only purusha will be left
- The world is real, but owes its existence to the purusha
- The “I” that suffers is not purusha: realization of this fact is liberation/salvation
- Prakriti naturally evolves towards a state of self-knowledge that liberates the purusha

# What the Indians knew

- Samkhya

- Prakriti's evolution

- The primordial Prakriti leads to Buddhi (intelligence) to Aham Kara (self) to Manas (mind) to the five senses to the five sense organs and to the five organs of action
    - Five elements: air, light, water, earth, ether
    - Total: 24 fundamental principles of prakriti

# What the Indians knew

- Samkhya
  - Ishvarakrishna (400 AD)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 2. Nyaya
    - Gautama (2<sup>nd</sup> c BC)
    - Logic
    - Four kinds of means of knowledge (pramanas): perception, inference, analogy and testimony
    - Knowledge is a relationship between self and non-self
    - Atomism (the world is composed of an infinite number of elementary units)
    - A system of behavior (like Yoga to Samkhya)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 3. Vaisesika
    - Kanada (3<sup>rd</sup> c BC)
    - Epistemology
    - Metaphysics
    - Atomism (the world is composed of an infinite number of elementary units)
    - A system of explanation (like Samkhya to Yoga)
    - Note: both Nyaya and Vaisesika developed atomism independently of the Greeks (atoms of matter, space and time)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 4. Purva-mimamsa
    - Literal interpretation of the first half of the Vedas
    - Emphasis on ritual like in ancestral times
    - Jaimini (400 BC)
    - Kumarila Bhatta (700 AD)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 5. Royal Yoga
    - Patanjali's "*Yoga Sutra*" (150 BC)
    - Samkhya's prakriti/purusha dynamics
    - Samkhya's metaphysical knowledge is not enough for liberation
    - Liberation also requires devotion and meditation
    - Raya Yoga = Bhakti (devotion) + Karma (deeds) + Jnana (knowledge) Yogas

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 5. Royal Yoga
    - Discipline to achieve liberation (e.g., understanding of prakriti/purusha) and ultimate knowledge
    - Samadhi: the state of mind in which thought grasps the ultimate essence of things, emancipates itself from time and lives in an eternal present

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - Royal Yoga - Eight steps of meditation
    - Self-control (yama)
    - Devotional rites (niyama)
    - Postures (asana)
    - Regulation of the breath (pranayama)
    - Restraint of the senses (pratyahara)
    - Focusing the mind on a specific part of the body (dharana)
    - Meditation (dhyana) on a metaphysical object
    - Profound contemplation (samadhi) leading to the union and identification with the object of meditation (pure purusha)
    - Liberation (kaivalya) from the illusions of sense and limitations of reason

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 5. Royal Yoga
    - Theism: God Isvara (not the creator but an exemplar of liberated being, a reference point for meditation, one of the many purushas)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - 6. Vedanta
    - Badarayana (450 BC)
    - Gaudapada: “Mandukyopanisad-karika” (750 AD)
    - Interpretation of the second half of the vedas
    - Systematic analysis of the nature of body, mind, and the ultimate
    - Inert matter originates from pure consciousness
    - All souls share in the absolute consciousness (Brahman = Atman) and are enveloped in karma
    - Phenomenal reality emanates from the absolute (Brahman)

# What the Indians knew

- **Six darshana (schools) of philosophy**
  - **6. Vedanta**
    - **Nothing is real but pure consciousness**
    - **Mind-body dualism is an illusion**
    - **The world is an illusion**

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - Vedanta
    - Monism (only one substance, Brahman=Atman)
    - Monotheism (only one God, as opposed to Vedic polytheism)
    - Theoretical counterpart to yoga
    - Subschoools
      - Shankara - Non-dualism (advaita)
      - Ramanuja - Qualified monism (visistadvaita)
      - Dualism (dvaita)

# What the Indians knew

- Six darshana (schools) of philosophy
  - Samkhya: Atheism, World is real (due to two substances, prakriti and purusha)
  - Yoga: Theism (Isvara), World is real (prakriti/purusha)
  - Vedanta: Theism (Brahman), World is not real (only one substance, spirit)

# What the Indians knew

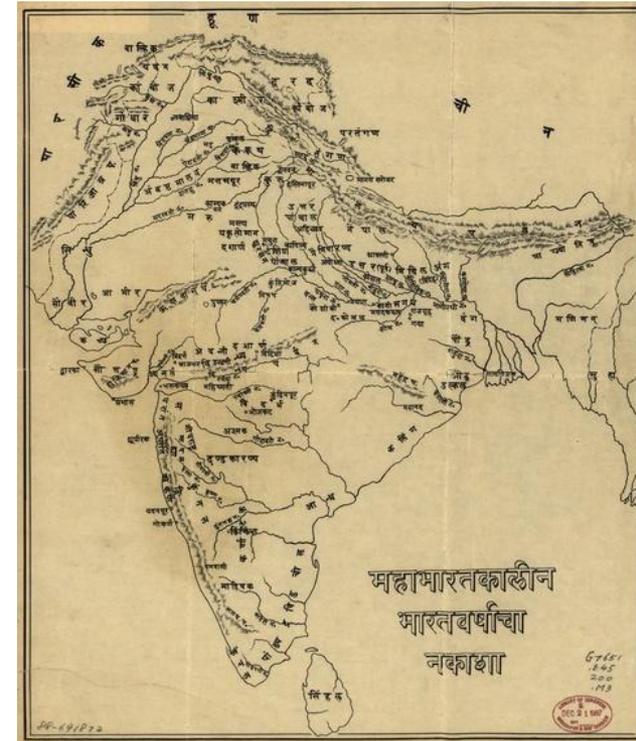
- Smriti (200 BC)
  - The Vedas are “shruti” (“what has been heard from the gods”). “Smriti” (“what is remembered”) is a compendium of the Vedas/Upanishad for ordinary people
  - Sanskrit epics (Mahabharata, Ramayana)
  - Sanskrit Puranas (Vedic textbooks for women and lower-caste men)
    - Bhagavata-Purana (18,000 verses dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu and his human incarnations Krishna and Rama)
  - Several Dharmashastras (regulating personal law, e.g. polygamy) including the Dharmasutras (personal conduct and rites)

# What the Indians knew

- Shastras: commentaries on the Hindu scriptures that focus on one specific discipline to provide timeless wisdom for it (a “manual”)
  - Bhautika Shastra (physics)
  - Rasayana Shastra (Chemistry)
  - Jeeva Shastra (Biology)
  - Vastu Shastra (architectural science)
  - Shilpa Shastra (science of sculpture)
  - Artha Shastra( economics)
  - (political science)

# What the Indians knew

- Vyasa: Mahabharata (6th c BC - 4th c AD)
  - 90,000 verses (longest poem in world literature)
  - Recited by sutas (charioteers)
  - Hundreds of versions
  - Set around the capital Hastinapura
  - Tale of the rivalry between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, which eventually destroy each other
  - Hundreds of side stories and meditations
  - Another way to achieve liberation/salvation which does not entail negation of life



# What the Indians knew

- Mahabharata (6th c BC - 4th c AD)
  - Conflict between two families for control of the kingdom, culminating in the battle of the Bhagavad Gita. The winner Yudhistira retires in the Himalayas and then ascends to heaven.
  - The whole war was Brahma's own idea. He sent demons to the Earth to cause massive destruction because the human population was getting out of control.

# What the Indians knew

- Mahabharata
  - Spiritual synthesis of the main Indian philosophical schools
  - The world and human life are full of ambiguities
  - No precise definition of good and evil
  - An ethical life is important, but there is no definition of what is “ethical”
  - Humans must look into themselves to find that definition

# What the Indians knew

- Mahabharata
  - Title's meaning: "the great tale of the Bhārata dynasty"
  - The land of Bharata extends from the mountains to perhaps the south

# What the Indians knew

- Bhagavad-Gita
  - 700 verse
  - A dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna on the even of a great battle
  - Krishna persuades Arjuna to fight
  - The god incarnate Krishna/Vishnu reveals himself so that humans can know the divine
  - Humans must act in order to save themselves
  - “Action is superior to inaction”
  - Social life, caring for the family, working, etc are not impediments to salvation - they are as good as ascetism and mysticism
  - The world was created by a caring god (Vishnu), who helps its creation achieve salvation

# What the Indians knew

- Bhagavad-Gita/ Opening scene
  - Krishna encourages the believers to slaughter the enemy
  - Dialogue between Krishna (God incarnate) and a human hero (Arjuna) before the battle
  - Arjuna does not want to fight his kinsmen but has to, out of devotion
  - Devotion releases him from dharma/duty

# What the Indians knew

- Bhagavad-Gita/ Song of the Lord (book VI of Mahabharata, 100 BC)
  - Attempt at reconciling worldly view of the Veda and metaphysical view of the Upanishad
  - Three paths to religious realization
    - path of deeds (karma yoga)
    - path of knowledge (jnana yoga)
    - path of devotion (bhakti yoga)
  - Attempt at reconciling Vedantic monism and Vedic polytheism: the gods emanate from the godhead “without attributes”)

# What the Indians knew

- Bhagavad-Gita/ Song of the Lord (book VI of Mahabharata, 100 BC)
  - Gunas are born from Prakriti
  - They cause the division of reality and unreality
  - Gunas create the illusion of the material world
  - The illusion keeps living beings under the control of Prakriti, i.e. of desire and attachment
  - The relative strength and combination of gunas determine the nature/behavior of beings
    - Sattva (purity) is pure knowledge
    - Rajas (change) is passion caused by desire and attachment and causing greed
    - Tamas (inertia) is darkness caused by ignorance and delusion and causing inaction
    - Each one tries to annihilate the others

# What the Indians knew

- Mahabharata
  - Krishna has thousands of wives

# What the Indians knew

- Harivamsha (45# AD)
  - The childhood of Krishna
  - Yashoda, Krishna's foster mother

# What the Indians knew

- Seven sacred rivers:
  - Ganges (northwest)
  - Yamuna (northwest)
  - Godavari (south)
  - Saraswati (northwest)
  - Narmada (central)
  - Indus/Sindhu (northwest)
  - Kaveri (south)

# What the Indians knew

- Seven sacred cities:
  - Varanasi
  - Ayothya (birthplace of Rama)
  - Mathura (birthplace of Krishna)
  - Hardvar
  - Kanchi
  - Ujjain
  - Dvaraka

# What the Indians knew

- Four dhams (divine adobes):
  - Bandrinath (Vishnu's shrine in the Himalaya)
  - Puri (Krishna Jagannatha's shrine in Orissa)
  - Rameshvara (Shiva's shrine in Tamil Nadu)
  - Dvarka (Krishna Dvarakadhisha's shrine in Gujarat)
- Tirthas (pilgrimages):
  - Pushkara (Brahman's tirtha in Rajasthan)

# What the Indians knew

- Shanti Parvan (book XII of Mahabharata, 100 BC)
  - Only philosophical meditation

# What the Indians knew

- Mahabharata
  - Long discussions about dharma
  - Tragedy of the individual who has no choice but to make the tragic choice
  - Humans are bound to fail, no matter what
  - Several women are prominent and polyandry is frequent (Draupadi has five husbands)

# What the Indians knew

- Ramayana (by Valmiki, 200 BC – 200 AD)
  - Set in Magadha and Kosala kingdoms
  - King Rama's wife Sita is kidnapped by the demon Ravana
  - Rama recovers his wife with the help of the monkey Hanuman
  - In books one and seven Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu
  - Sita = perfect woman



Bharat during Ramayan times.

# What the Indians knew

- Ramayana: age of order, peace and prosperity
- Mahabharata: age of chaos, war and decline
- Ramayana: good triumphs over evil
- Mahabharata: a civil war with no winners
- Ramayana is poetry
- Mahabharata is philosophy
- The Ramayana cites the Mahabharata
- The Mahabharata contains a summary of the Ramayana

# What the Indians knew

- The Hindu canon (written in Sanskrit)
  - Shruti (includes some poetry)
    - Vedas
    - Brahmana
    - Upanishad
  - Smriti (all poetry)
    - Ramayana
    - Mahabharata (incl. Bhagavad Gita)
    - Purana
    - Dharmaśāstra (incl. Manusmriti)

# What the Indians knew

- Hinduism and Buddhism
  - A completely new way of looking at the human condition compared with the West and China
  - The world that we perceive is illusory
  - Suffering
    - Hinduism: caused by samsara (cycle of rebirths) and maya (illusory world)
    - Buddhism: caused by ignorance (“avidja”) of the nature of reality and by attachment to Earthly belongings (“tanha”)

# What the Indians knew

- Hinduism and Buddhism
  - Salvation is achieved by transcending the human condition (enlightenment)
    - Hinduism: moksha (via yoga) leading to unity of atman (individual soul) with brahman (universal soul)
    - Buddhism: escape from samsara (nirvana)

# What the Indians knew

- Hinduism: Upanishads (100+ of them, 8th c BC till 5th c BC)
  - Written and understood by the higher castes only
  - Emphasis on the self (atman)
  - Fails outside India
- Buddhism: Pali canon (5,000 sutras, 6th c BC till 1st c BC)
  - Missionaries and monks instead of priests
  - The self is an illusion too (anatta)
  - Fails in India

# What the Indians knew

- Hinduism and Buddhism
  - Buddhism is too theoretical
  - India: ordinary people prefer the stories of the Mahabharata and Ramayana
  - China: ordinary people prefer the Buddhist schools that preach a paradise, sound like Daoism, make enlightenment easier, allow magic, etc

# What the Indians knew

- Hinduism and Buddhism
  - Buddhism is nonviolent
  - Hinduism becomes more nonviolent
  - Many Hindus abandon animal sacrifice

# What the Indians knew

- Greece
  - Fragmented in city states
  - State religion: a chaotic pantheon of deities
  - Populist religion: the mysteries
  - Legendary heroes
  - A bewildering array of philosophers
- India
  - Fragmented in many states
  - Priestly religion: a chaotic pantheon of deities
  - Populist religion: Shiva and Vishnu
  - Upanishads and Buddhist canon
  - Six philosophical schools

# What the Indians knew

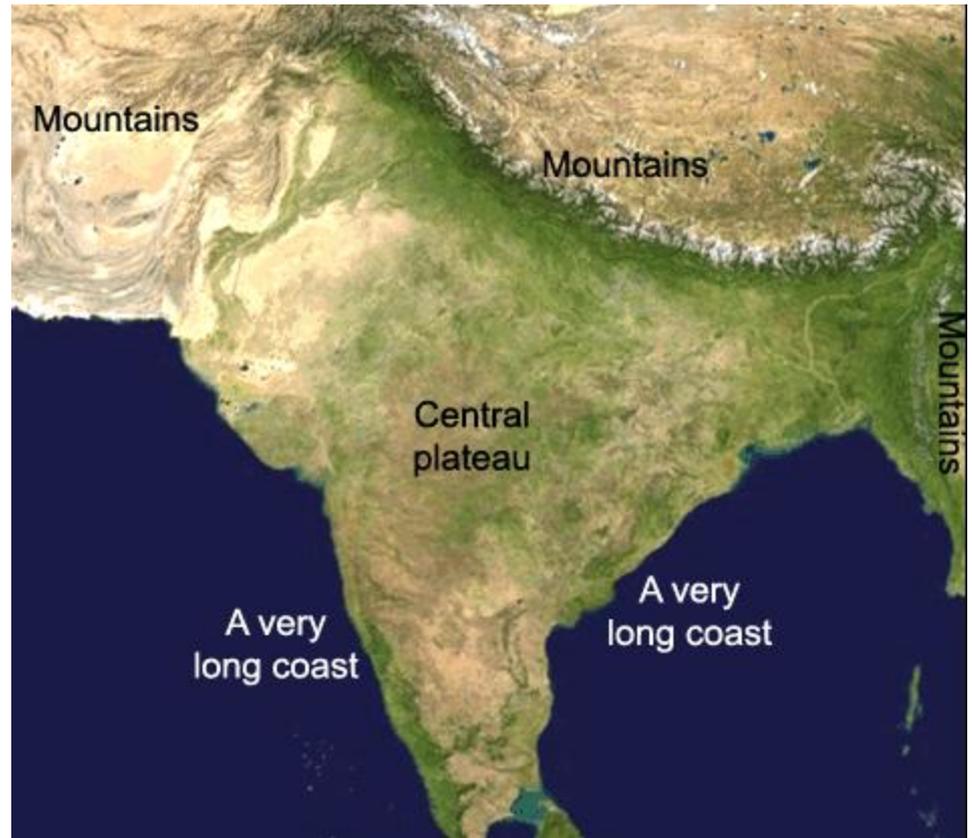
- India and Greece
  - Puranas = Homeric poems and other Greek legends
  - Seven sacred cities = Oracle cities (e.g. Delphi)
  - Mt Meru = Mt Olympus (and they both lie to the north)
  - Thirtas = Mystery cults

# What the Indians knew

- India and China
  - Very little in common
  - India's mindset is exuberant and theoretical
  - China's mindset is somber and practical
  - Confucianism is about building a just society
  - Buddhism disappears from India and morphs in China
  - Daoism has more in common with Hellenistic and Roman religions than with Hinduism
  - “Eastern philosophy” is a Western invention

# What the Indians knew

- Greece and India: geography matters



# What the Indians knew

- Egypt and China: geography matters
  - Protected from almost all sides
  - Undisturbed for centuries
  - Mostly indifferent to the rest of the world
  - River-centric
  - More cohesive societies



# What the Indians knew

Founders of major religions



# What the Indians knew

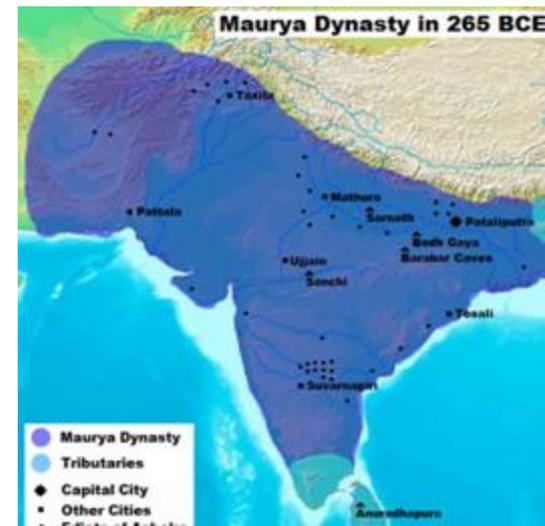
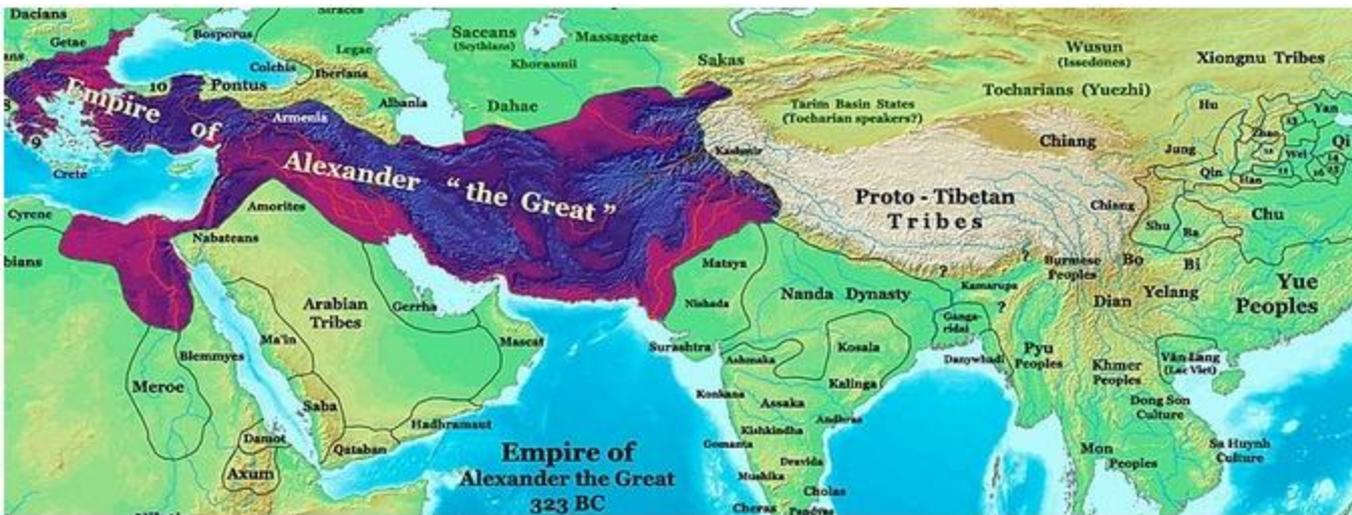
- Bharata Muni: "Natya Shastra" (2nd c. BC)
  - Oldest extant manual on stagecraft
  - Scenography, choreography, music

# What the Indians knew

- Maurya empire
  - Persian ideal of world conquest
  - Ashoka turned the military conquest into a spiritual conquest
  - Ashoka's pillars are derived from Persepolis

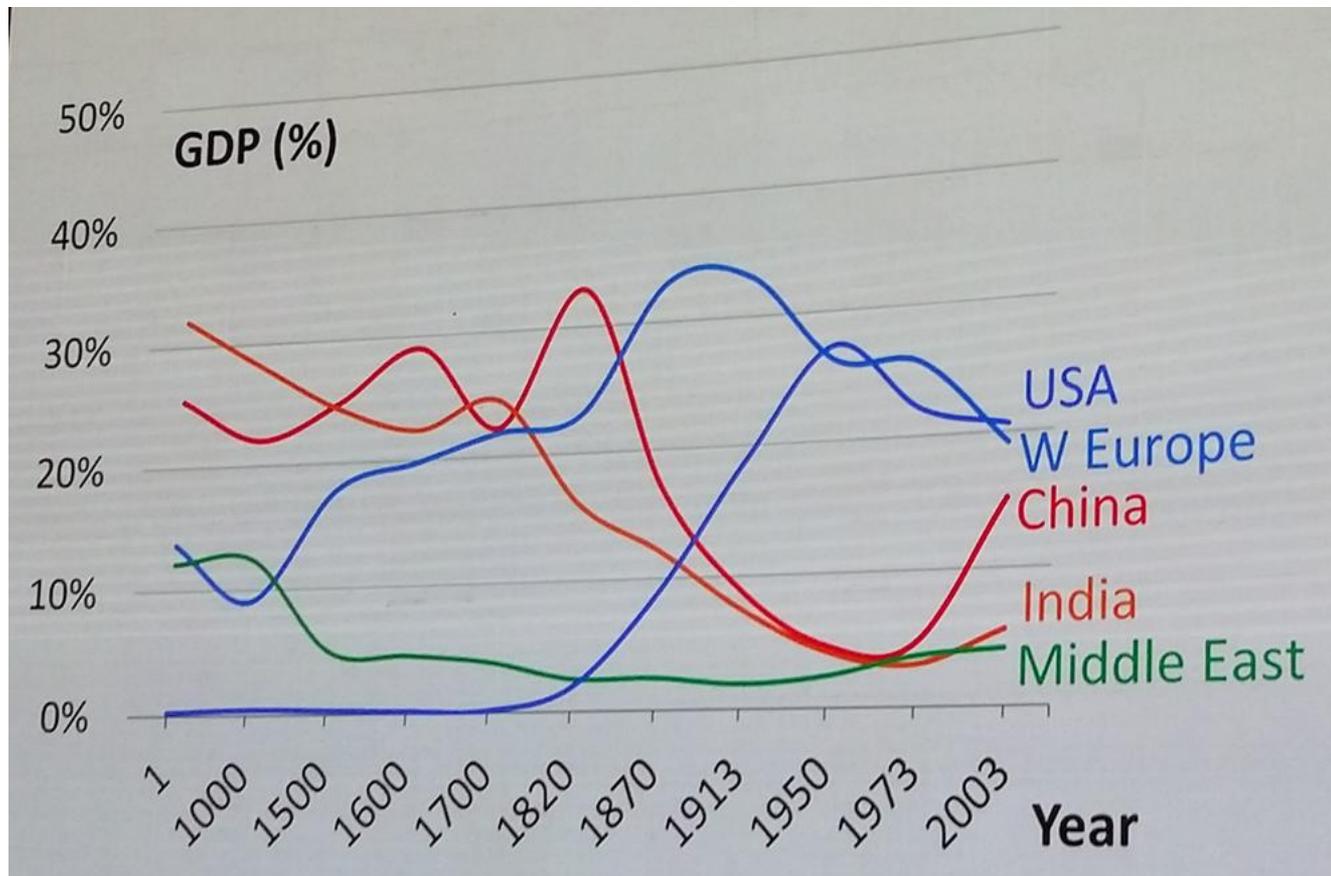
# What the Indians knew

- Maurya empire
  - Note: Alexander, Chandragupta Maurya and Qin Shi were very young when they founded their empires.



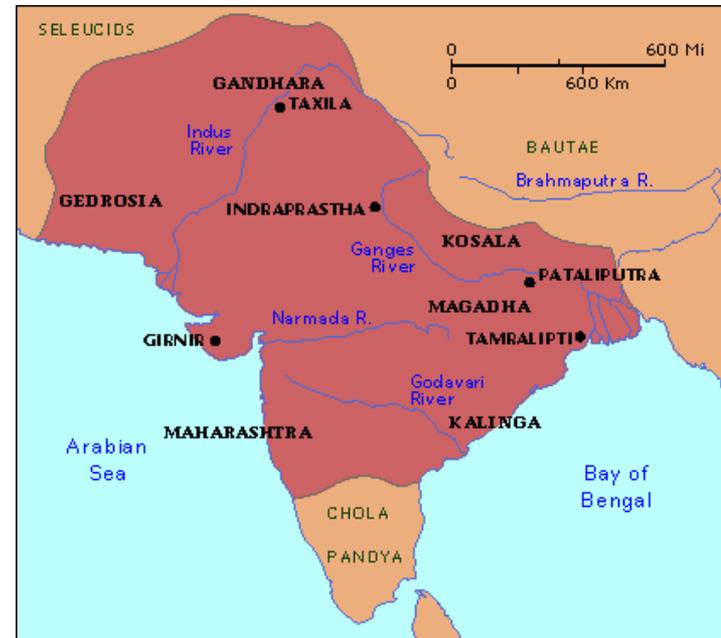
# What the Indians knew

- Maurya empire



# What the Indians knew

- Pataliputra
  - Capital of Maurya empire
  - Under Asoka (3rd century BC) one of the world's largest cities (150,000-200,000 people)
  - Palace modeled after the pillared halls of Persepolis
  - Timber and clay main materials
  - 250 BC: Third Buddhist council



# What the Indians knew

- Visual arts
  - Buddhism prevalent over Hinduism till the 5th c AD



# Buddhist Art

- Mauryan period
  - Recycling themes from Mesopotamia and Persia
  - Ashoka's column at Lauriya-Nandangarh (243 BC)
  - Ashoka's Pillar of the Four Lions (240 BC)
  - Yaksha of Mathura (200 BC)



Yaksha of 200 BC,  
Mathura-Museum



Sarnath Museum



# Buddhist Art

- Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka: Thuparama (3rd century BC)



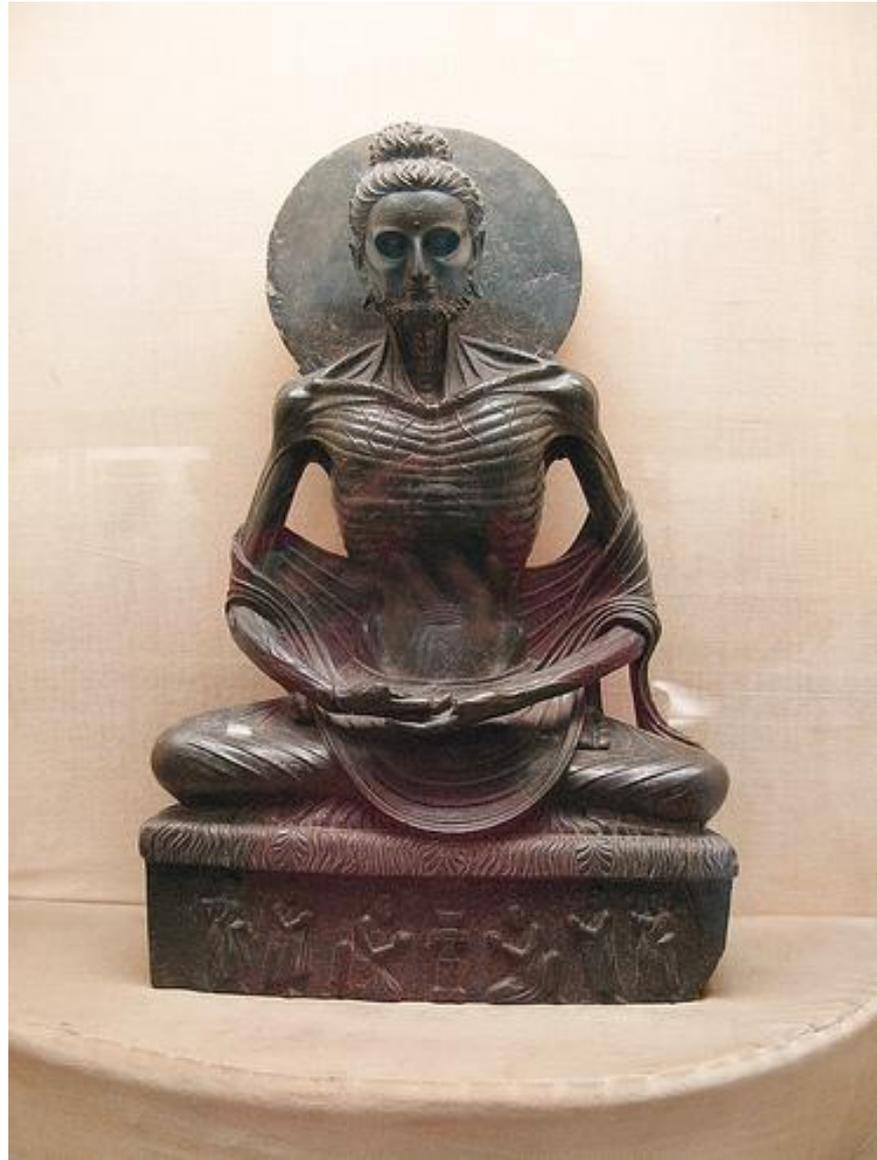
# Buddhist Art

- Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka: Ruvanveli Mahaseya (2nd c BC)



# Buddhist Art

- Fasting Buddha/Sakyamuni (3rd c BC, Lahore Museum)



# Buddhist Art

- **Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)**



185 to 73 BCE

# Buddhist Art

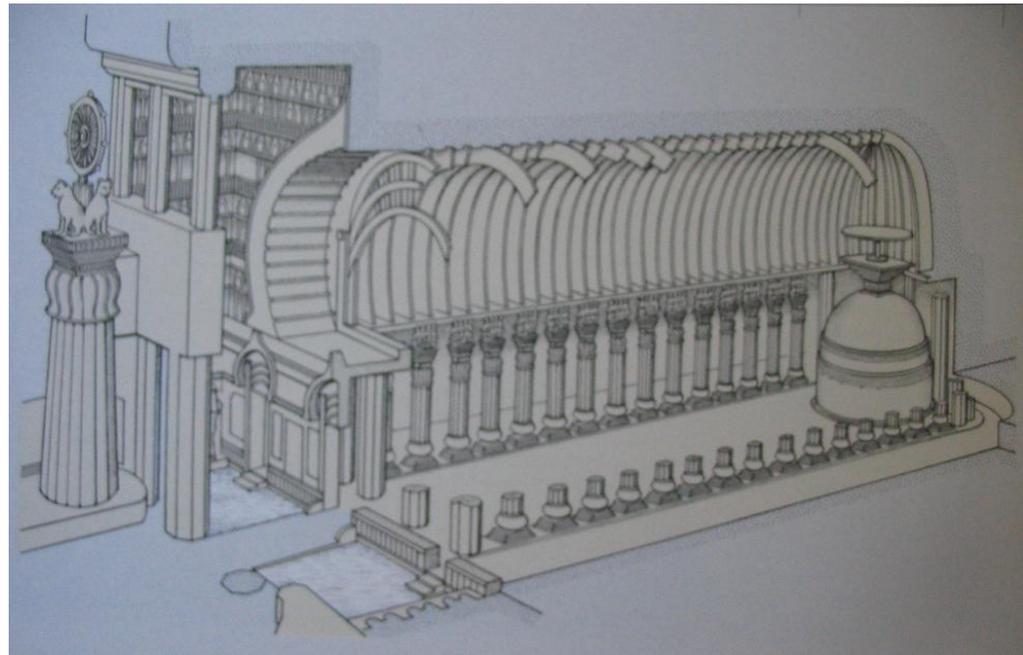
- Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)
  - The stupa: funereal tumulus that developed into a cosmic building, both a memorial to a saint and a diagram of the spiritual universe
    - When the Buddha died his ashes were divided into eight portions and buried under mounds
    - First stupas: 5th c BC
    - Balance of round and square shapes
    - Gateways at the four points of the compass

# Buddhist Art

- Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)
  - The chaitya: carving of chambers into living stone to accommodate stupas
    - Colonnaded aisles
    - Arched vaults
    - Curving ribs
  - Vihara/monastery, originally rock-cut cells

# Buddhist Art

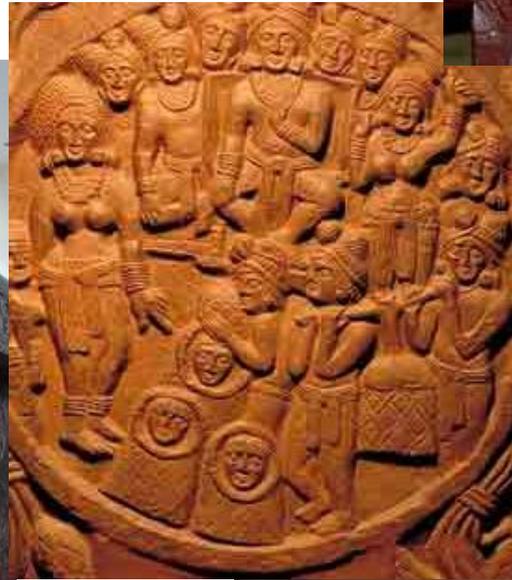
- Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)
  - Caves
    - Bhaja caves (1st c BC)
    - Karla caves (1st c BC)
    - Ajanta caves (1st c BC)
  - Preference for rock-cut “buildings” over free-standing buildings



Karla (Cultural Atlas of India)

# Buddhist Art

- Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)
  - Bharhut's stupa (2nd c BC)



Calcutta Museum

# Buddhist Art

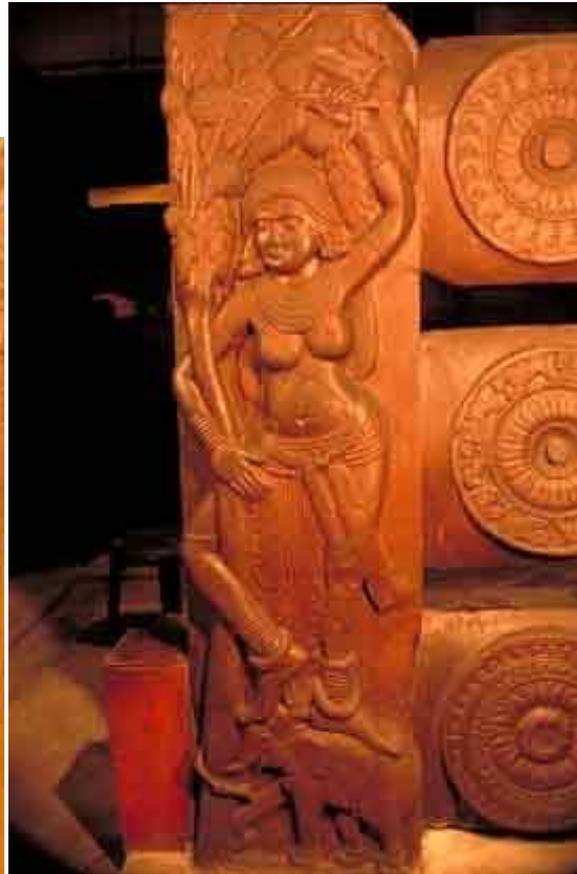
- Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)
  - Bharhut's stupa (2nd c BC)



Calcutta Museum

# Buddhist Art

- Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)
  - Bharhut's stupa (2nd c BC)



Calcutta Museum



# Buddhist Art

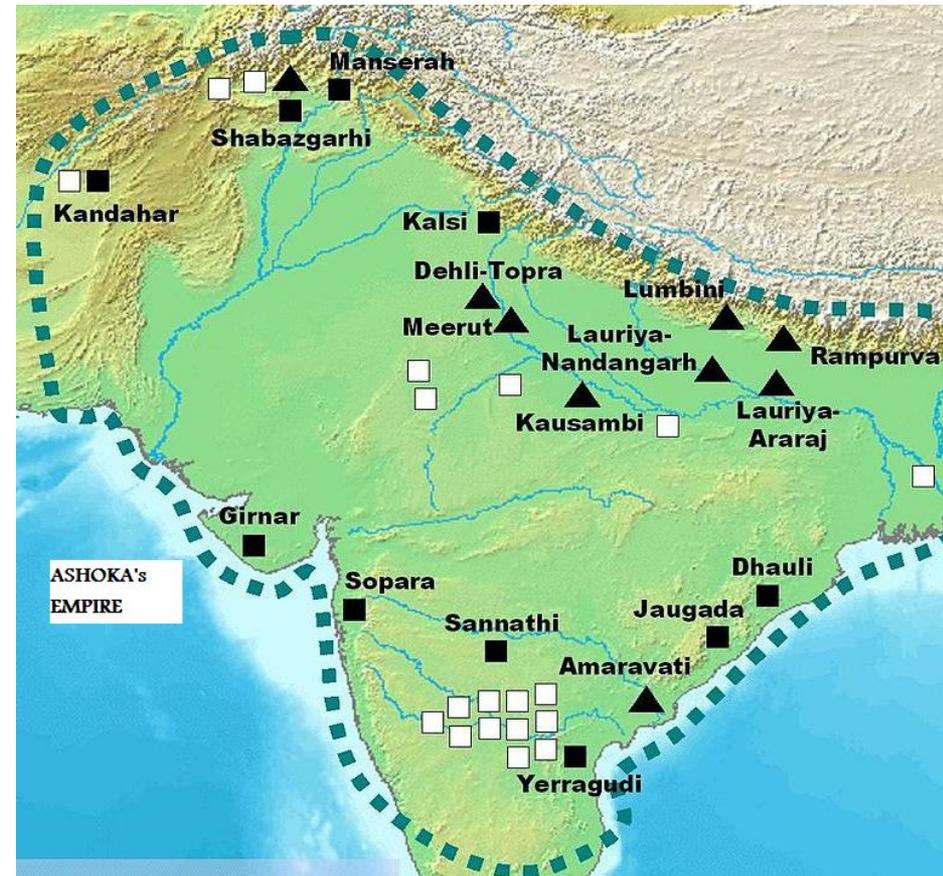
- Sunga period (2nd-1st c BC)
  - Bharhut's stupa (2nd c BC)



Worship of the Bodhi tree

# Buddhist Art

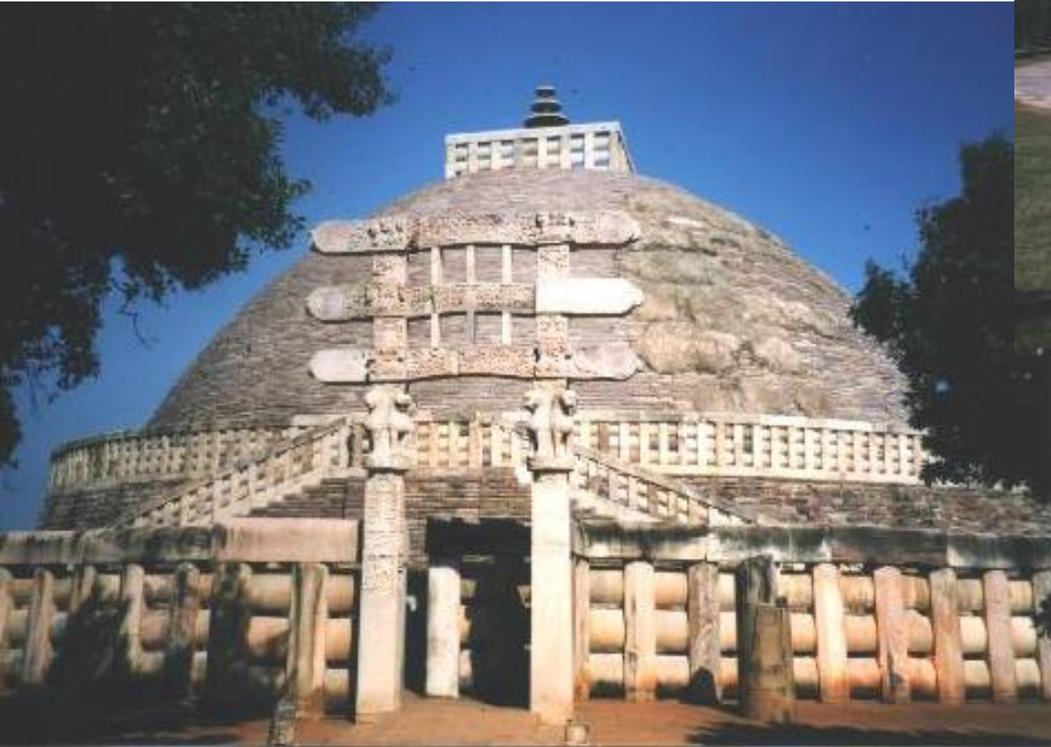
- Ashoka's stupas
  - Great stupa at Sanchi
  - Bodhnath stupa in Katmandu



# Buddhist Art

Stupa2, Sanchi

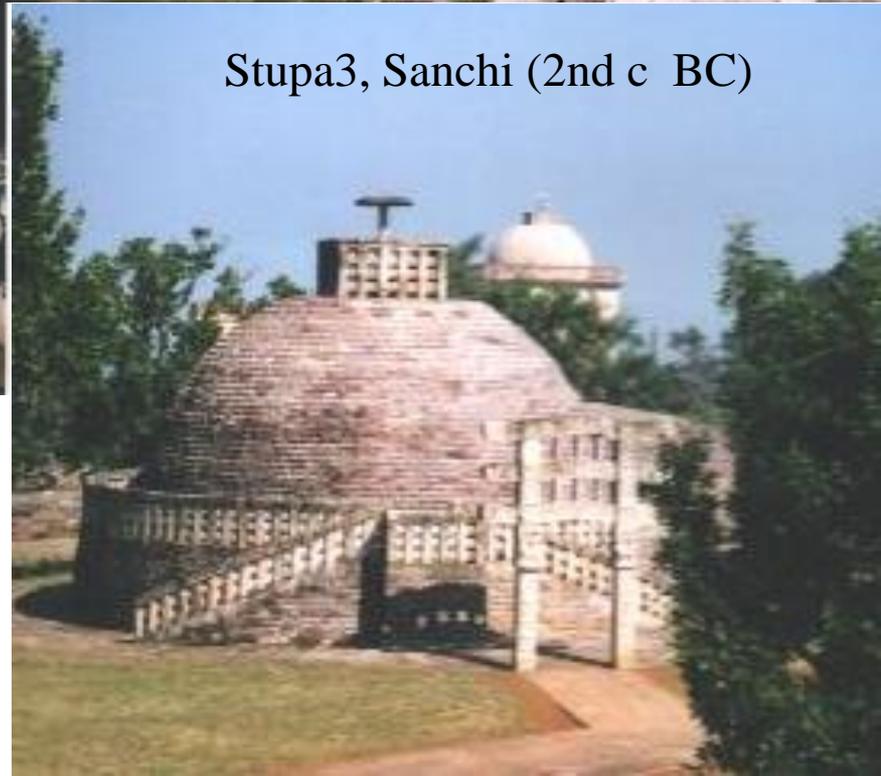
- **Sanchi**



Stupa 1, Sanchi (2nd c BC,  
oldest stone structure in India)

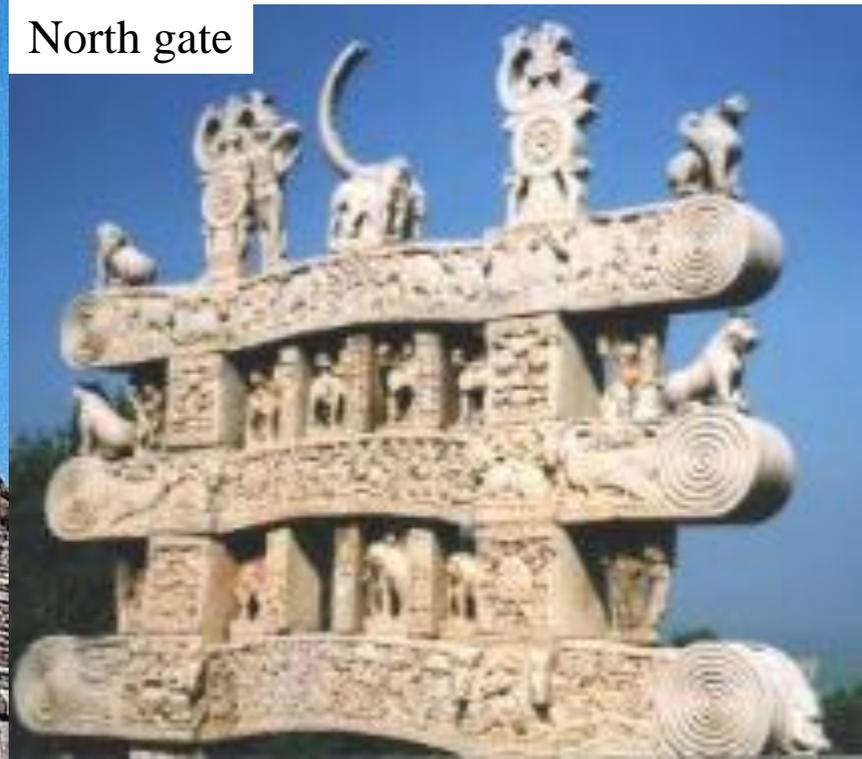
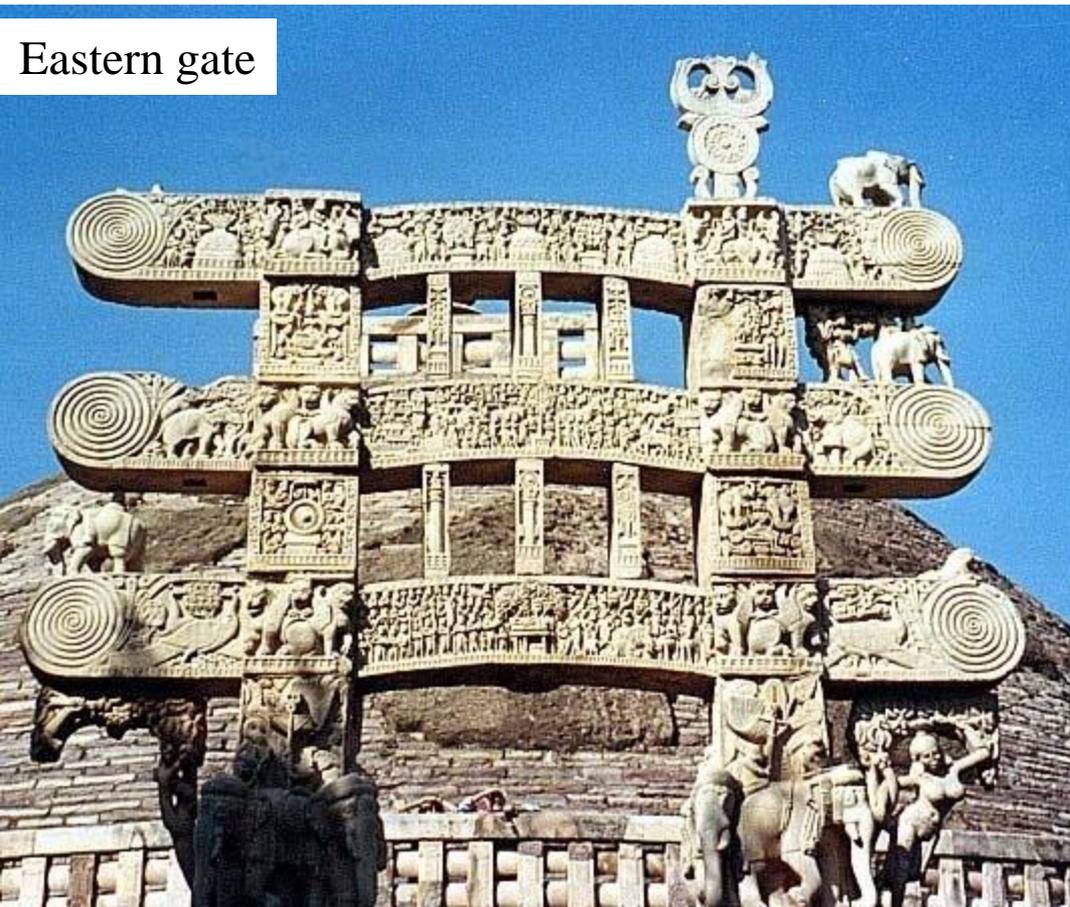


Stupa3, Sanchi (2nd c BC)



# Buddhist Art

- Sanchi



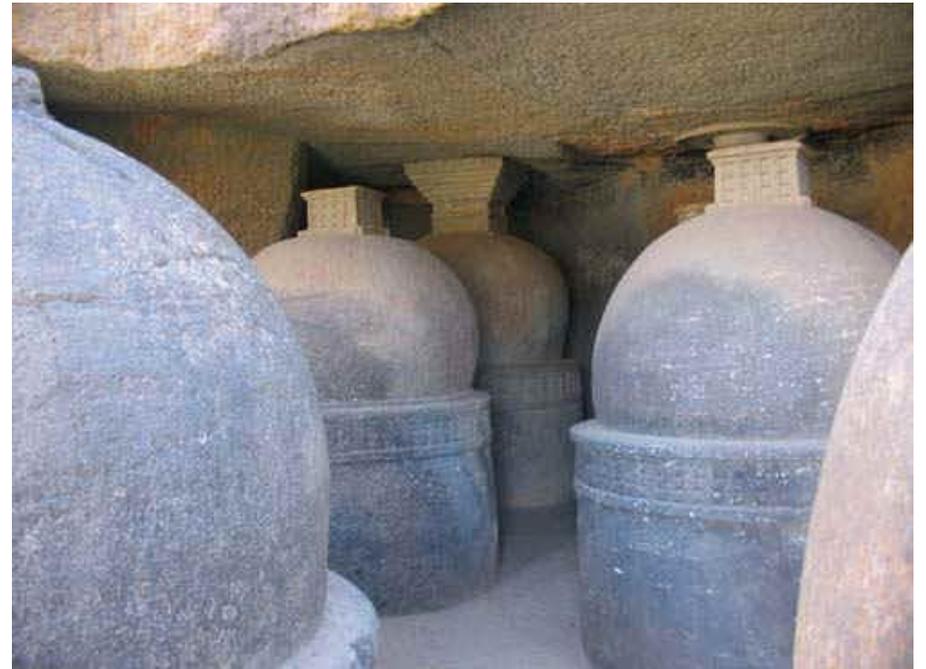
# Buddhist Art

- Ajanta Cave 10 (1st c BC)



# Buddhist

- **Bhaja caves (1st c BC)**



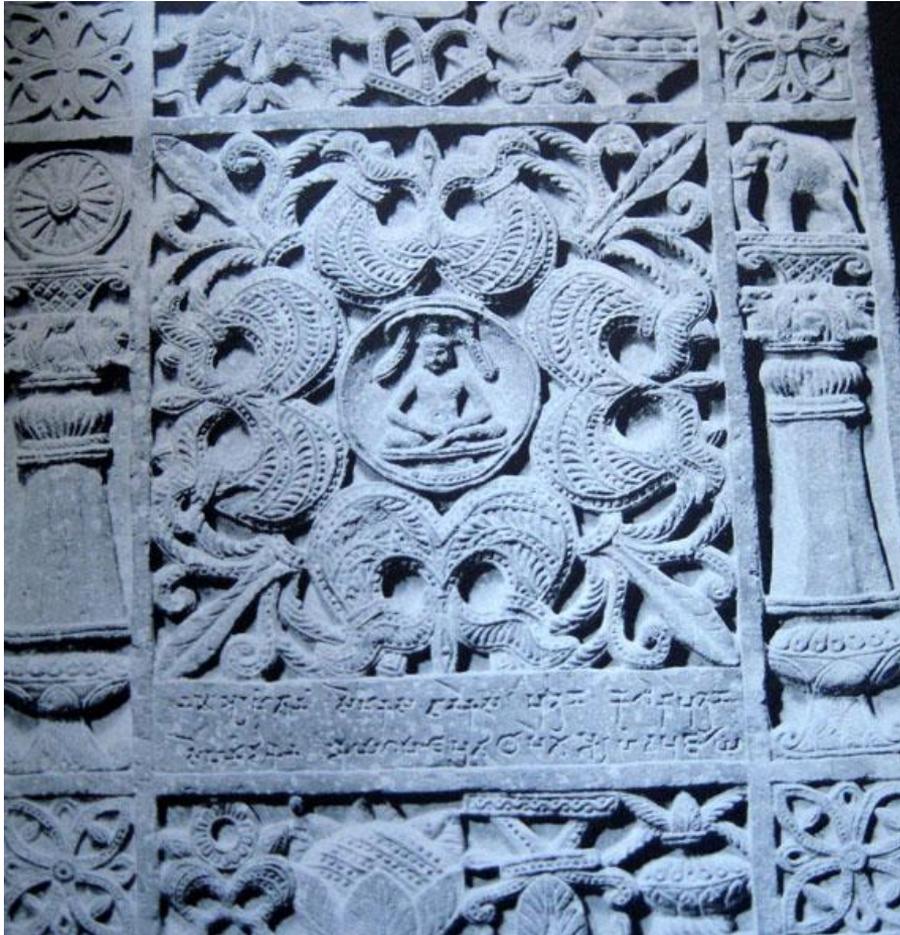
# Jain Art

- Udaigiri caves (1st c BC)



# Jain Art

- **Sculpture**



Mathura, 2nd c AD  
(New Delhi Nat. Museum)

# Buddhist Art

- Karla caves (1st c BC)



# Buddhist Art

- Amaravati, South India (1st c BC): transition from symbolic representation of Buddha to iconic representation (seated or standing)



Satavahana dynasty, 2nd-3rd c AD  
(Amaravati Archeological Museum)

# Buddhist Art

- Amaravati stupa (3d c AD)



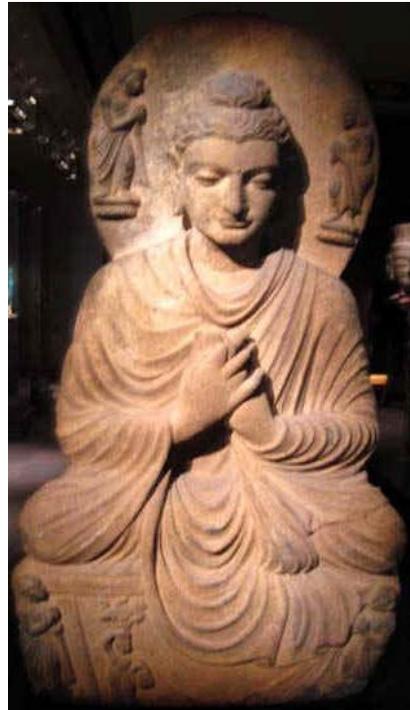
# Buddhist Art

- Amaravati, South India (1st c BC): transition from symbolic representation of Buddha to iconic representation (seated or standing)

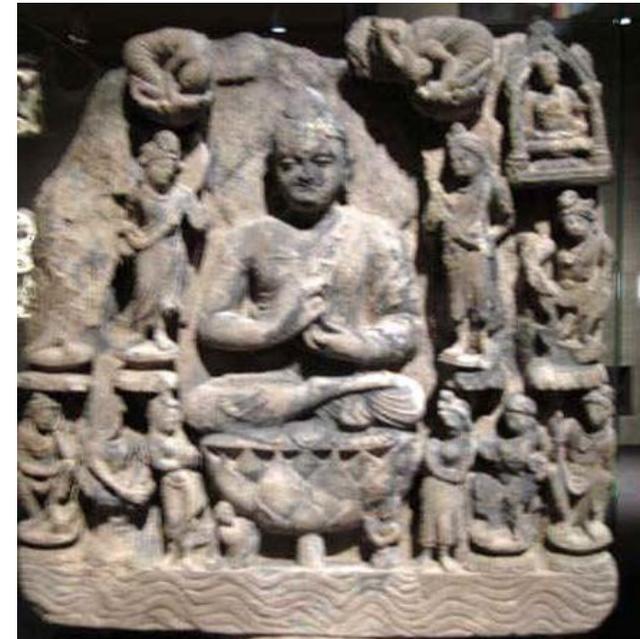
Satavahana dynasty, 3rd c AD  
(Nagarjunalconda Museum)



Gandhara, 3rd c  
(Tokyo Museum)



Gandhara, 3rd c  
(Tokyo Museum)



# Buddhist Art

- The Kushan Empire
  - Kushan Empire (descendants of nomadic tribes expelled from China): originally settled in Bactria (Hellenistic influence), bordering on Hindu kingdoms, Persia, and Han
  - Kushans champion Mahayana Buddhism (bodhisattvas)
  - 150: The Ahin Posh stupa (Jalalabad, Afghanistan – no photos exist)
  - 233: collapse of Kushan but Buddhism remains prevalent in Bactria
  - 380: Buddhists carve two giant Buddha statues at Bamiya

# Buddhist Art

- Gandhara school
  - Gandhara/Chandahara (northwestern Pakistan and Afghanistan), former Bactrian (Greek) colony



# Buddhist Art

- Gandhara school
  - The Kushans adopt Buddhism as official religion of the region (1st c AD)
  - Kushan king Kanishka (2nd c AD) convenes the 4<sup>th</sup> Buddhist council that marks the schism of Mahayana and Nikaya Buddhism
  - Gandhara statues of the Kushan period (1st-2nd c AD): first anthropomorphic representation of Buddha
  - Buddha image derived from Roman imperial statues and Roman religious faces

# Buddhist Art

- **Gandhara school**



Four scenes of the life of Buddha from Gandhara 100-300  
San Francisco Asian Art Museum

# Buddhist Art

- Gandhara school



Gandhara relief (3rd c)  
Tokyo Museum



# Buddhist Art

- Gandhara school
  - Kanishka's stupa at Peshawar (2nd c AD, 120m tall, destroyed, one of the largest buildings in the world)



Kanishka's relic casket  
(British Museum)

# Buddhist Art

- Gandhara



2nd c AD  
(Miho Museum,  
Kyoto)



219

(Rietberg Museum, Zurich)

# Buddhist Art

- Gandhara school



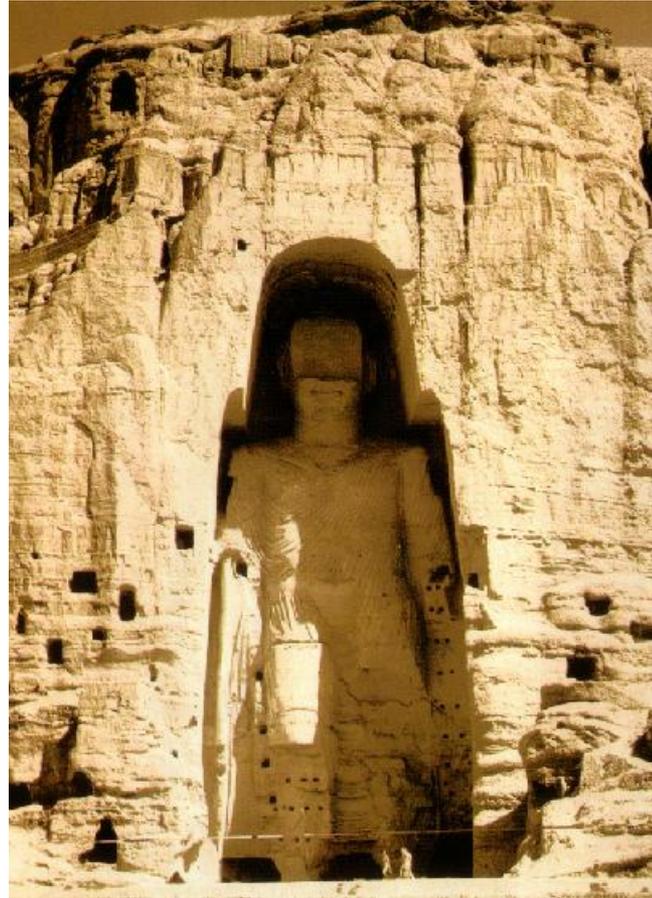
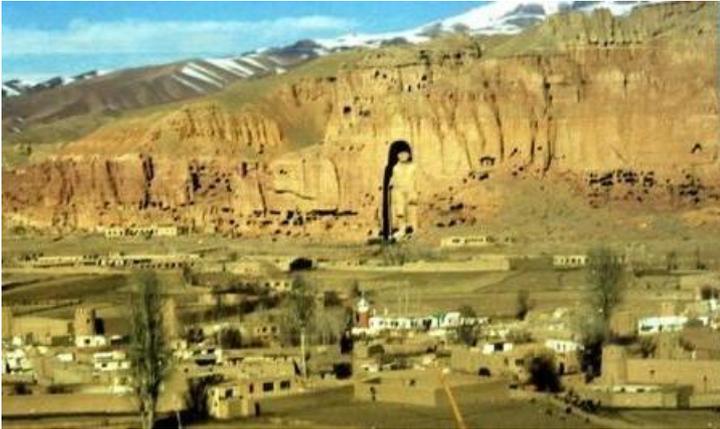
Life of Buddha  
3rd c AD  
(Berkeley Museum)



Teaching Buddha  
3rd c AD  
(Berkeley Museum)

# Buddhist Art

- **Gandhara school**



Bamiyan Valley  
(6th c AD)

# Buddhist Art

- Amaravati school (150-250) pure Indian style of Buddhist sculpture

# Buddhist Art

- Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka: Jetawanarama (3rd century AD)



# Buddhist Art

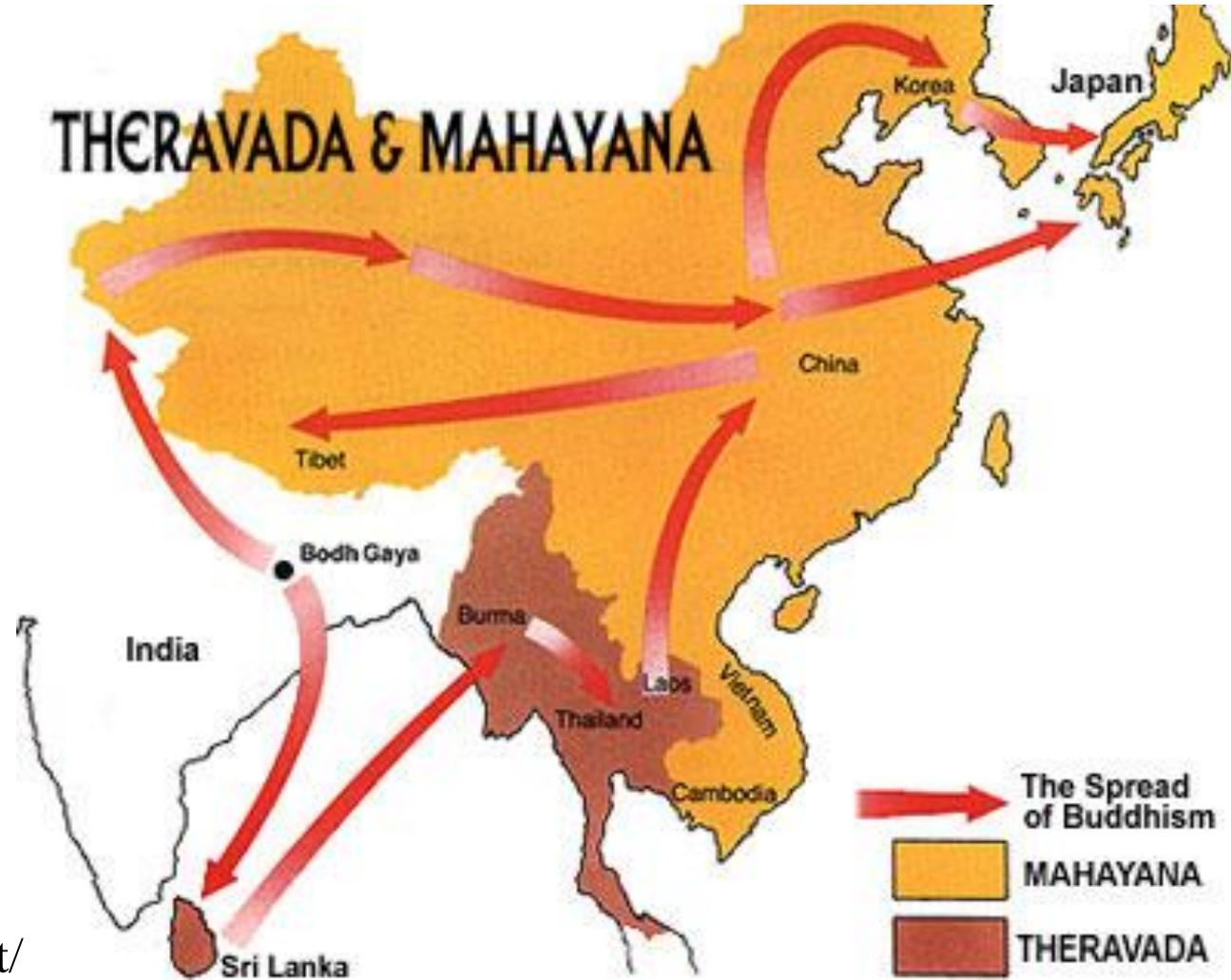
- Buddha's symbols:
  - Footprint (his missionary life)
  - Tree (his awakening)
  - Wheel (setting the wheel in motion)
  - Lotus (purity)

# Buddhist Art

- Satavahana caves (100 BC – 200 AD)
  - Bhaja
  - Karle
  - Nasik
  - Ajanta
  - Ellora

# Buddhism

- Theravada and Mahayana



# What the Indians knew

- Hinayana ("Theravada") Buddhism
  - The Pali canon (50BC, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand)
  - Only Buddha Sakyamuni (the historical Buddha)
  - Individual nirvana as the goal (each individual has to take care of her own salvation)
  - Reality consists of an infinite number of momentary realities (dharmas)
  - Nirvana (liberation) and samsara (death and rebirth) are different (nirvana eliminates the world)
  - Arhat is the Theravadin who has achieved enlightenment

# What the Indians knew

- Mahayana Buddhism
  - Mahayana Buddhism regards the Mahayana sutras (discourses of the Buddha) as more important than the Tipitaka
  - “Sermons on the Perfection of Wisdom” (1st c BC)
  - Ashvaghosha: “The Awakening of Faith” (50AD)
  - Mahayana Buddhism born with the Kushan
  - Tibet, China, Japan

# What the Indians knew

- Mahayana Buddhism
  - Buddha as the eternal, omnipresent, transcendental being
  - The human Buddha was but an apparition of the transcendental Buddha
  - Buddhahood open to everybody, not only to a few
  - Three forms of the Buddha (cosmic, transcendental, transformational)

# What the Indians knew

- Mahayana Buddhism
  - Prajna (wisdom) and karuna (love)
  - Universal nirvana as the goal
  - Bodhisattvas help individuals achieve salvation
  - Doctrine of transfer of merit
  - Buddha nature (tathagata-garbha) is present in every human being and in all living beings (gods, humans, animals)
  - All sentient beings can become Buddhas
  - Multiple Buddhas
  - Nirvana and samsara are neither different nor identical, nor both identical and different, nor neither identical nor different

# What the Indians knew

- Mahayana Buddhism scriptures:
  - "Tipitaka"
  - Additional non-Tipitaka sutras (Buddhavacana):
    - Prajñāparamita sutras (Perfection of Wisdom)
    - Avatamsaka sutra (Garland sutra, 50 AD)
    - Saddharmapundarika Sutra (Lotus Sutra)
    - Sukhavativyuha Sutra (Western Paradise Sutra)
    - Vimalakirti Sutra
    - Lankavatara Sutra (Sri Lanka Sutra)
    - etc

# Buddhism

- Mahayana Buddhism:
  - Trikaya (threefold nature) of the Buddha:
    - Dharma-kaya, the body of essence
      - The essence of the Buddha quality, consciousness, void
      - The universal quality of being, as revealed in the Lotus Sutra (that predicts the eventual salvation of all animal life)
      - It can only be known by intuition, not by reason
      - Bodhisattvas can achieve Buddhahood (the body of essence) through ten stages of perfection
      - The historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, was an emanation of the body of essence
      - Infinite number of Buddhas in innumerable worlds to help sentient beings reach enlightenment

# Buddhism

- Mahayana Buddhism:
  - Trikaya (threefold nature) of the Buddha:
    - Dharma-kaya, the body of essence
      - Five “Dhyani” buddhas higher than human-looking buddhas (eg Sakyamuni):
      - Vairocana, Akshobhya, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava (usually represented with Vairocana in the center)



# Buddhism

- **Mahayana Buddhism:**
  - **Trikaya (threefold nature) of the Buddha:**
    - **Sambhoga-kaya, the body of communal bliss/ enjoyment**
      - **God-like quality revealed during meditation**
      - **Accessible only by Bodhisattvas**
      - **The five cosmic Buddhas that sustain the world (Vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amida, Amoghasiddhi) are manifestations of the body of communal bliss**

# Buddhism

- **Mahayana Buddhism:**
  - **Trikaya (threefold nature) of the Buddha:**
    - **Nirmana-kaya , the body of transformation**
      - **Human manifestation in a mortal body of the transient world of death and rebirth to save sentient beings (lead sentient beings to enlightenment)**
      - **The historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, Sakyamuni, was the first body of transformation**

# Buddhism

- **Mahayana Buddhism:**
  - **Trikaya (threefold nature) of the Buddha:**
    - **Nirmanakaya , the body of transformation**
      - **Bodhisattva is a sentient being who achieves Buddhahood (the body of essence) through ten stages**
      - **Bodhisattvas postpone nirvana to help others achieve enlightenment/salvation**

# Buddhism

- **Mahayana Buddhism:**
  - **Trikaya (threefold nature) of the Buddha:**
    - **Nirmanakaya**, the body of transformation
      - **Deification of bodhisattvas: Amida (God of infinite light), Avalokiteshvara (God of compassion), Maitreya (God of salvation), etc**
      - **The Amida Buddha (Amitabha) dwells in a "pure land" ("Sukhavati") that can be entered by a simple act of faith (salvation by devotion alone)**
      - **Maitreya is a future Buddha who will come from Heaven to lead all beings to enlightenment)**

# Buddhism

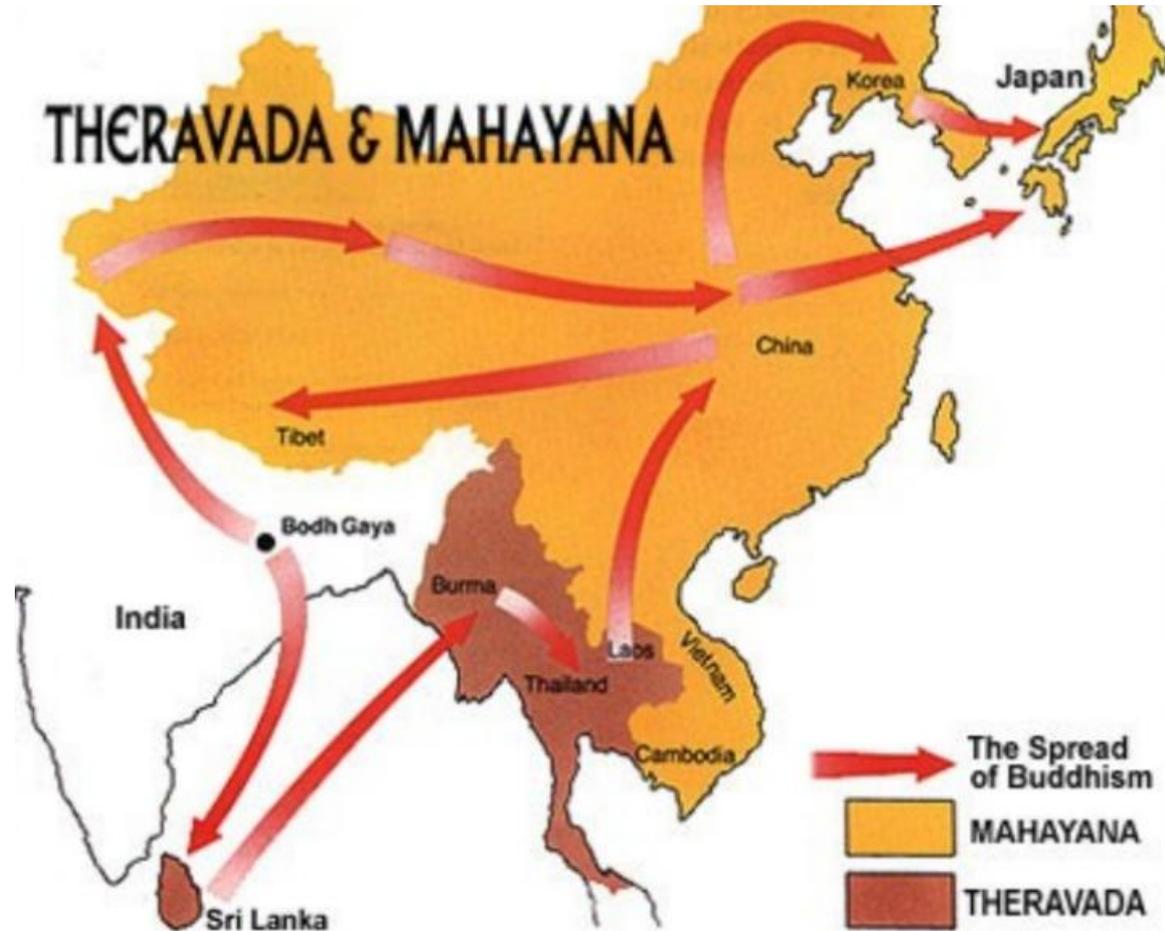
- Mahayana Buddhism:
  - Sakyamuni trinity
    - Sakyamuni
    - Manjusri/ Wenshu: bodhisattva who is the embodiment of prajna (wisdom)
    - Samantarhadra/ Puxian: bodhisattva who is the embodiment of truth

# Buddhism

- Theravada/Hinayana
  - The Buddha as a supremely enlightened human
  - Only one Buddha
  - Very difficult to achieve salvation
  - Arhat only saves himself
  - Atheistic
  - Nirvana: end of cycles
- Mahayana
  - The Buddha as a manifestation of a divine being
  - Many Buddhas
  - Easier to achieve salvation
  - Charity helps
  - Bodhisattva can save others
  - Polytheistic (multiple Buddhas plus Bodhisattvas)
  - Nirvana: paradise is a place (contrasted with hell)

# Buddhism

- Theravada/Hinayana
  - Spreads in Southeast Asia
- Mahayana
  - Becomes polytheistic (almost a copy of Hinduism) and declines in the Hindu world



# What the Indians knew

- Avatamsaka sutra (Garland sutra, first sutra, 50 AD)
  - A description of enlightenment
  - All things are inter-related
  - No distinction between mind and body
  - No distinction between subject and object
  - No distinction between space and time

# What the Indians knew

- Esoteric Buddhism
  - Nirmanakaya (phenomenal body) of Sakyamuni and dharmakaya (transcendental body) are different manifestations of the same principle
  - Esoteric mandalas to represent the non-dualism of the two bodies: Vajradhatu mandala and Garbhadhatu mandala

# What the Indians knew

- **Nagarjuna (150 AD, Buddhist)**
  - **Founder of the Madhyamika (Middle Path) school of Mahayana Buddhism**
  - **Reality cannot be grasped (logical agnosticism)**
    - **All theories, including Buddhism, lead to inconsistencies**
    - **Dharmas neither exist nor don't exist ("four-fold negation")**
    - **There is no difference between samsara (the world) and nirvana (salvation)**

# What the Indians knew

- Nagarjuna (150 AD, Buddhist)
  - The essential nature of reality is Sunyata (emptiness) of all things
    - The phenomenal world is a fiction of our mind, that creates categories/forms to understand reality
    - The Absolute does not need categories/forms and is therefore “empty”
    - There is a correspondence between the Absolute and reality as we see it
    - Dharmas do not exist, nor does the atman, nor do things
    - Emptiness is meditation that cleans one's mind of fictitious reality (the mind dissolves in emptiness)

# What the Indians knew

- **Nagarjuna (150 AD, Buddhist)**
  - **Everything that exists owes its existence to something else**
  - **All absolute views must be wrong because everything is relative to something else**
  - **Absolute truth is not possible**
  - **Wisdom (prajna), which is direct insight, leads to higher and higher truth**
  - **Middle way between identity and difference, existence and non-existence, truth and falsity, eternity and non-eternity, ...**

# What the Indians knew

- Vasubandhu (350AD, Buddhist)
  - Founder of the Vijnanavada or Yogacara school (Consciousness Only) of Mahayana Buddhism
  - The way we see things is shaped by previous experience, therefore things do not exist, or, better, are inside our consciousness
  - Only consciousness exists
  - Consciousness is inter-subjective because each “mind” (vehicle of consciousness) influences the others
  - Karma is also inter-subjective, and therefore collective

# What the Indians knew

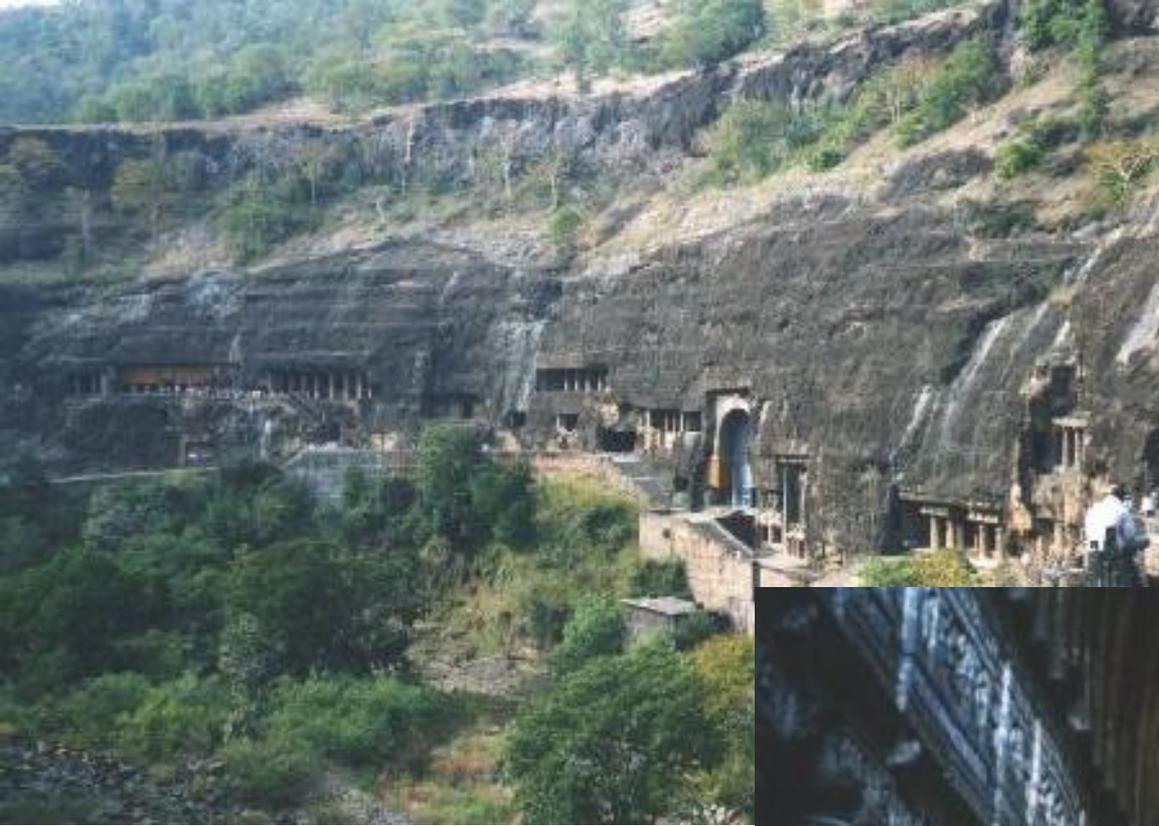
- Vasubandhu (350AD, Buddhist)
  - There are eight kinds of consciousness (vijnana): five senses, self (manas), practical consciousness, subconscious (alaya-vijnana).
  - The subconscious is a store of seeds planted by previous actions and is responsible for karma.

# What the Indians knew

- Buddhism business
  - Buddhism more supportive of business than Hinduism
  - No caste taboos on trade
  - Money is spent on trade instead of sacrifices
  - Buddhists evangelize all over Asia, unlike Hindus who do not travel
  - Buddhist pilgrimage sites become centers of commerce



Bamiya (380 AD)



Ajanta (465 AD)  
Vakataka kingdom



# What the Indians knew

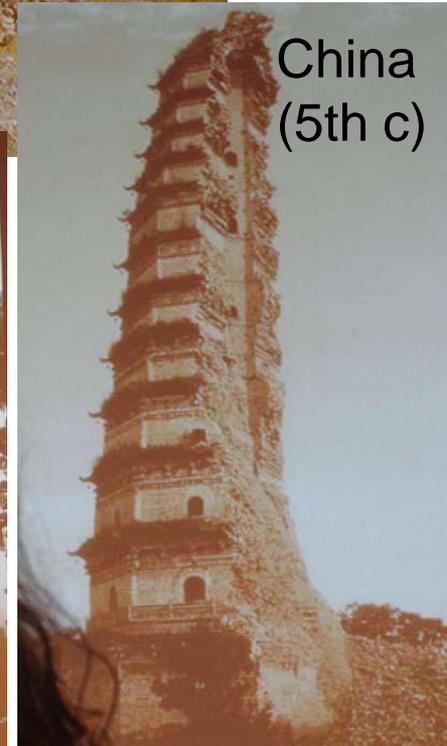
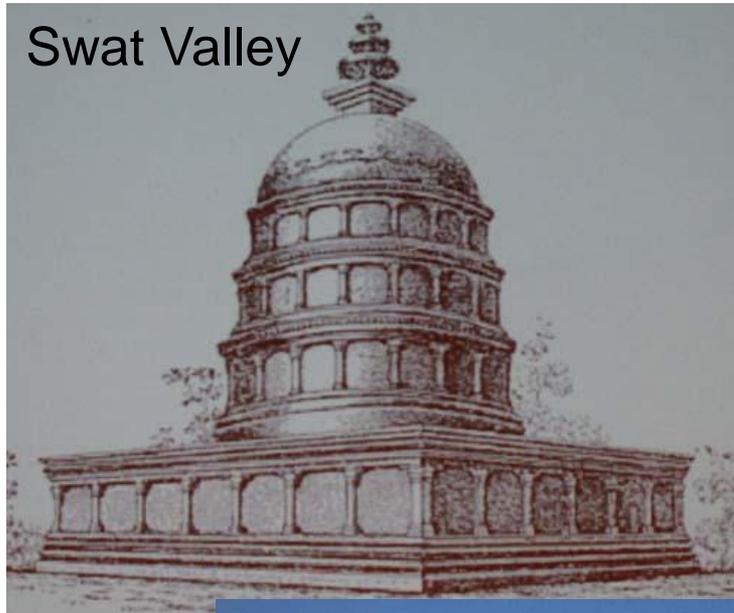
- **Ishvarakrishna (b 350AD)**
  - **Samkhya school**
  - **The material and the mental are real**
  - **They emanate from the primordial substance (prakriti) that is evolving towards its final cause (purusha)**
  - **Prakriti is made of inertia (tamas), activity (rajas) and rationality (sattva)**
  - **The universe is but the vehicle for prakriti to reach purusha**
  - **Prakriti evolves into thought (mahat) and then the world splits into matter and mind**

# What the Indians knew

- **Ishvarakrishna (b 350AD)**
  - **Matter is ruled by tamas, mind is ruled by sattva, and the two interact via rajas**
  - **Everything evolves except purusha, which is the goal of evolution, and is at each step the fuel of evolution**
  - **Humans may liberate their purusha from their body and achieve kaivalya, a state of pure consciousness**
  - **Humans desire to escape from the torture of three sufferings: celestial misery (caused by the gods), terrestrial misery (caused by nature) and inner misery (caused by the body)**

# What the Indians knew

- Evolution of the stupa as it moves from Gandhara to China: verticalization



# What the Indians knew

- **Tamil India**
  - **Roman Empire (31 BC) increases demand for Indian spices (especially pepper)**
  - **Discovery of monsoons (45 AD) increases trade with Arabia**
  - **Apostle St Thomas/Didymus (1st c AD)**
  - **Refugees from Persia's persecution of Christians (4th c AD)**

# What the Indians knew

- Asia in the year 500



# What the Indians knew

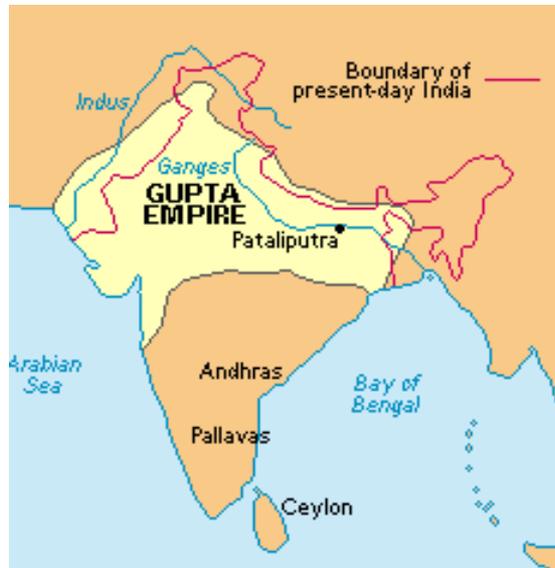
- **Sculpture/Jain**

See

<http://www.scaruffi.com/museums/jain>

# What the Indians knew

- **Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)**
  - **Capital still at Patna (Pataliputra)**



# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)
  - Decline of Buddhism, rise of Hinduism
  - Reduced contacts with the West, following Persian-Roman wars
  - Resurgence of the Brahmin priests
  - Old gods (e.g., Indra) abandoned in favor of trimurti: Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva (creation, preservation, destruction)
  - Emphasis on priestly rites, not on metaphysics

# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)
- New cults:
  - Shiva's son Skanda (the war god) and elephant-headed Ganesh (5th c AD)
  - Surya, the sun god
  - Goddesses (each god is complemented by a female power): Laksmi (Vishnu's wife), Durga (Shiva's wife), and, in general, Shakti (Lakshmi is Vishnu's shakti and Parvati is Shiva's shakti, and she is also Kali and Durga)

# What the Indians knew

- Puranas (4th c – 12th c)
  - Written in bad Sanskrit
  - The “pulp fiction” of Hinduism
  - Legends of kings and gods
  - Mahapuranas: lengthy poems in Sanskrit about Vishnu and Shiva (total 429,000 verses)
  - Topics:
    - sarga (creation)
    - pratisarga (dissolution and recreation)
    - vamsa (divine genealogies)
    - manvantara (ages of Manu)
    - vamsanucarita (dynastic history)

# What the Indians knew

- Puranas
  - Encyclopedias of folk tales, mostly taken from the Mahabharata
  - Stories of the gods fighting the demons
  - Local deities identified with Vishnu or Shiva
  - Mythology of Vishnu (several incarnations and parables, including Rama and Krishna)
  - Mythology of Shiva (sex and violence, ambiguous qualities, pre-Aryan themes)
  - Guide to living a pious life (e.g. perform private rites, puya)

# What the Indians knew

- Puranas

- Agni 15,400 verses
- Bhagavata 18,000 verses
- Brahma 10,000 verses
- Brahmanda 12,000 verses (4<sup>th</sup> c?)
- Brahmavaivarta 17,000 verses
- Garuda 19,000 verses
- Harivamsa 16,000 verses
- Kurma 17,000 verses (6<sup>th</sup> c?)
- Linga 11,000 verses
- Markandeya 09,000 verses (3<sup>rd</sup> c?)
- Matsya 14,000 verses (3<sup>rd</sup> c?)
- Narada 25,000 verses
- Padma 55,000 verses (8<sup>th</sup> c)
- Shiva 24,000 verses (8<sup>th</sup> c)
- Skanda 81,100 verses (8<sup>th</sup> c)
- Vamana 10,000 verses (5<sup>th</sup> c)
- Varaha 24,000 verses (8<sup>th</sup> c)
- Vayu 24,000 verses
- Vishnu 23,000 verses

# What the Indians knew

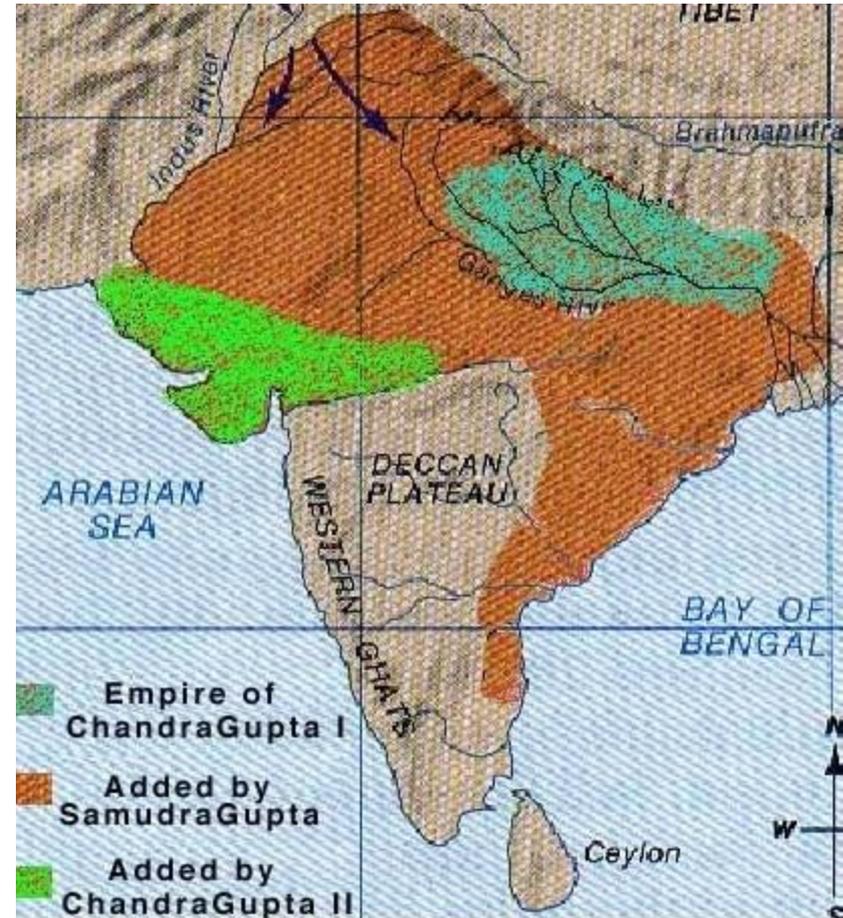
- Creation myth in the Puranas
  - The Earth as a disk between two bowls, the heavens and the underworld (the cosmic egg of Brahma, Brahmanda, “biranya garbha”)
  - Infinite universes (infinite cosmic eggs)
  - Mt Meru as the center of the world

# What the Indians knew

- Creation myth in the Puranas
  - We live in the Kali Yuga (the Age of Iron), the final and most negative of four cycles (cosmic seasons)
    - Sati-yuga =  $432,000 \times 4$  yugas = 1,728,000
    - Tretaa-yuga =  $432,000 \times 3$  = 1,296,000
    - Dwaapara-yuga =  $432,000 \times 2$  = 864,000
    - Kali-yuga =  $432,000 \times 1$  = 432,000
    - 1 Mahayuga (ten yugas) = 4,320,000 years
    - 1 day of Brahma = 1,000 mahayugas = 4.32 billion years
    - The Earth is 1,955,889,031 years old

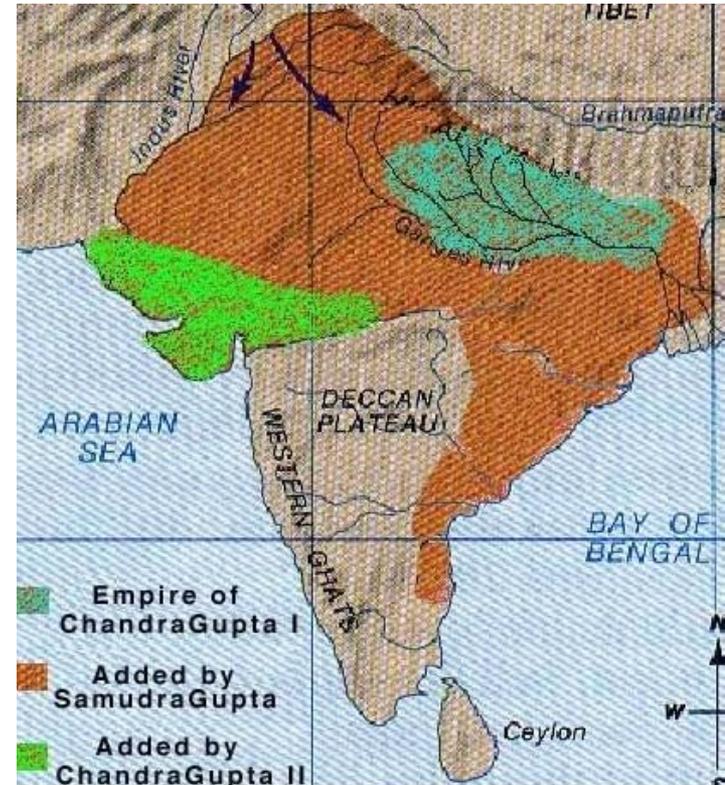
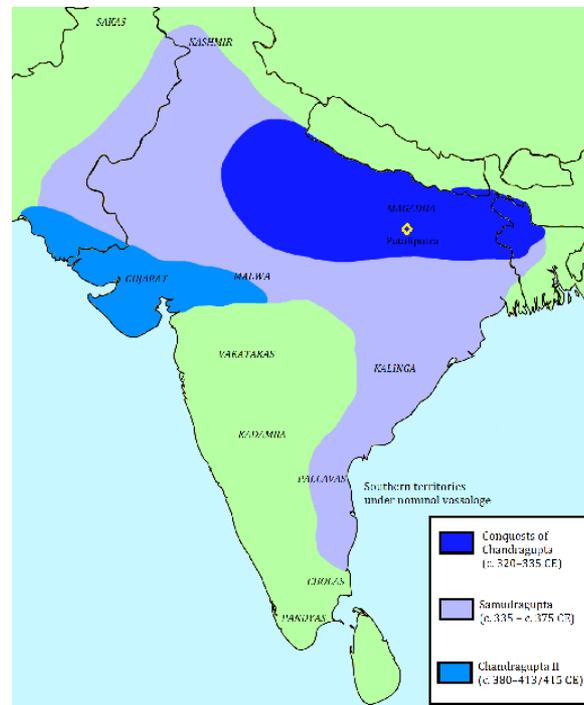
# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)
  - Originates in Magadha
  - Founded by Chandra Gupta
  - Capital city: Pataliputra



# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)
  - Originates in Magadha
  - Founded by Chandra Gupta
  - Capital city: Pataliputra



# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)
  - Major sects of the Gupta era: Vaishnavism (Vishnu/Krishna), Saivism (Shiva), Saktism
  - New cults:
    - Shiva's son Skanda (the war god, 1st c AD) and elephant-headed Ganesa (patron deity of commercial and literary enterprises, 5th c AD)
    - Surya, the sun god
    - Goddesses: Laksmi/Sri (goddess of fortune and Vishnu's wife, 1st c AD), Durga (Shiva's wife, 4th c AD), Saktism (devotion to the female creative principle of the Mother Goddess)

# What the Indians knew

- Gupta architecture
  - Hindu temple architecture (derived from Buddhist/Jain architecture): the temple is the home of the deity (like in ancient Greece)
  - Brick and stone temples: 7th c AD
  - Hindu temple: a small cella (central chamber), a sikhara (spire), representing a cave inside Meru
  - Cave temples (early Ellora)
  - Culmination of Gupta temple architecture: Buddhist temple of Bodh Gaya (7th c AD)
  - First international style in Asia, spreading to China, Japan, Central Asia, Southeast Asia

# What the Indians knew

- Gupta architecture
  - Culmination of Gupta temple architecture:  
Buddhist temple of Bodh Gaya (7th c AD)



# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)
  - Dance (bharat natyam style)
  - Body language of dancing transferred to sculpture and painting, introducing rhythm in the visual arts (“Vishnudharmottaram”, earliest manual on art: painting and sculpture derive from dance which derives from music)

# What the Indians knew

- **Beginning of Hinduist Art**



Shiva lingam  
(Gudimallam, 1st c AD)



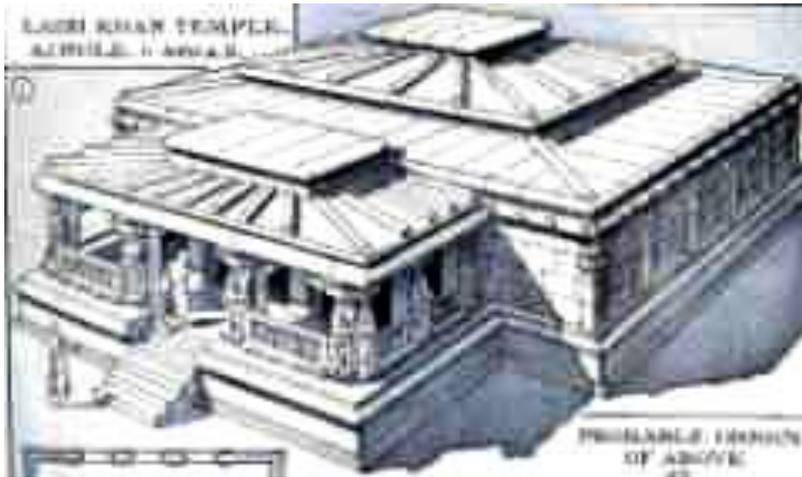
Boar Avatar of Vishnu  
(Udayagiri, 400 AD)

Shiva trinity  
(Mumbai, 600 AD)



# What the Indians knew

- Aihole, "cradle of Indian architecture"



Ladh Khan, 6th c

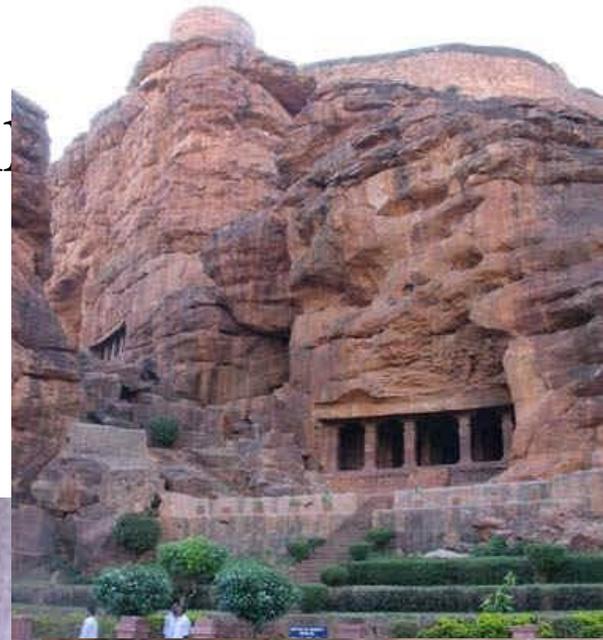


Durga temple, 7th c

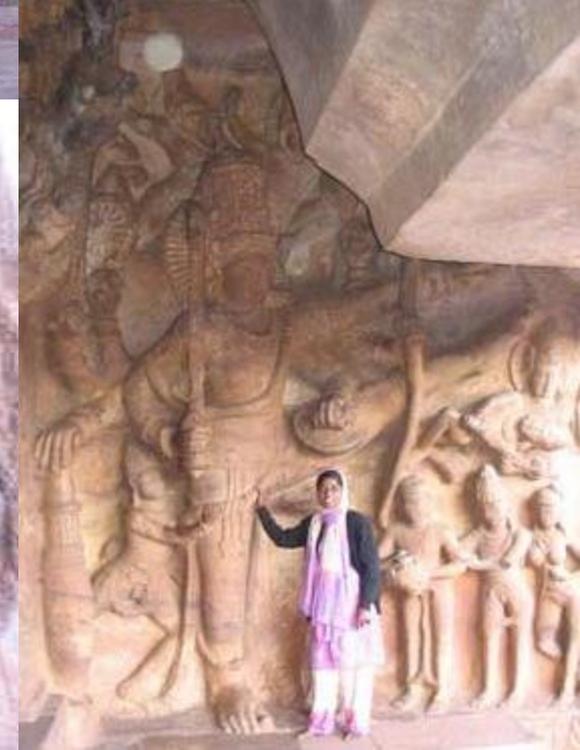


Huccimalli temple, 5th c

# What the Indians know



- **Badami**

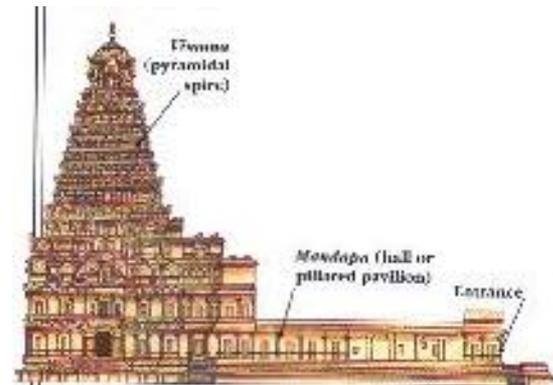
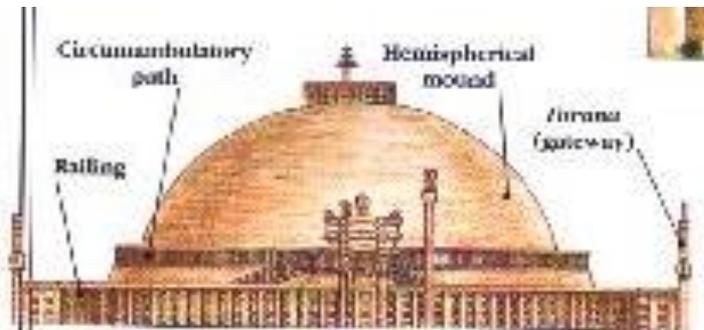


# What the Indians knew

- **Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)**
  - Dasavatara Temple at Deogarh (6th c)



- Buddhist stupa vs Hindu temple

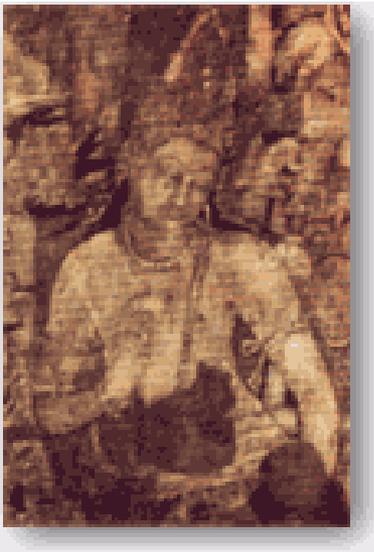


# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (318-550)
  - Buddhist Chaitya hall (most elaborate interior architecture before Islam, eg Ajanta)
  - Architecture is sculpture (chaitya sculpted in the rock)
  - Standardized (sitting) Buddha image (eg Sarnath)
  - Painting benefits to the detriment of sculpture (Ajanta)

# What the Indians knew

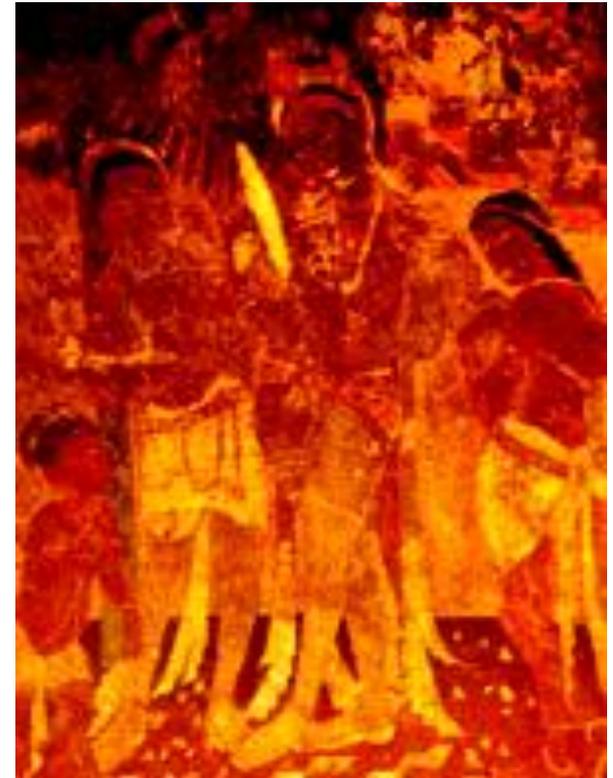
- **Gupta India (4th-6th c AD)**



Ajanta Cave 1  
(600 AD)



4th c AD (New Delhi Museum)



Ajanta Cave 17

# What the Indians knew

- **Gupta India (318-550)**



Ajanta, Cave 19, 6th c AD



Ajanta, Cave 26, 642 AD

Sarnath Buddha  
of 5th c AD



# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (318-550)
  - Aristocracy worships Vishnu-Krishna -Rama monotheism
  - Middle class worships Buddhism or Jainism
  - Peasants worship the fertility cult of Shiva
  - Decline of Gupta empire (invasions of Huns, Sulikas, Gurajaras) causes decline of middle class and therefore of Buddhism and Jainism, and restoration of Vishnu/Shiva cults

# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (318-550)
  - Boom of literature and science
  - First books (earliest extant: 350 AD)
  - Write in Sanskrit
  - Patronage of Sanskrit literature
  - Revival of Sanskrit (Prakrit was the administrative language under the Maurya)
  - First treatise on algebra (Aryabhata, 499, also heliocentric theory)
  - “Siddhantas” (5th c): trigonometry
  - But way behind in Geometry and Astronomy
  - Chess (6th c AD)
  - Astronomer Varahamihira (6<sup>th</sup> c)
  - Mathematician Brahmagupta (7<sup>th</sup> c)

# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (318-550)
  - University of Nalanda (5th c - 12th c), oldest in the world (students from Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Sumatra and even China, the only place outside China where Chinese scholars went for education)
  - Teaching by debating, not by lecturing

# What the Indians knew

- **Gupta India (318-550)**
  - **Aryabhata (499): The Earth revolves around the Sun**

# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (318-550)
  - Poetry
    - Kalidasa (Sanskrit, 353): "Meghadhuta"
  - Theater
    - Kalidasa (Sanskrit, 353): "Shakuntala"
  - Drama (Nataka, derived from dance)
  - Six darshana (schools) of philosophy

# What the Indians knew

- **Gupta India (318-550)**
  - **Mathematics**
    - **“Arabic” numerals (300 BC)**
    - **Decimal system**

# What the Indians knew

- Gupta India (318-550)
  - Decline of western influence (last Indian embassy to Constantinople: 530)
  - Shift towards China and Southeast Asia
  - Spreading of Indian culture
    - Burma: kingdom of Pegu (1080): Hinayana Buddhism, Bagan
    - Java: colonized by Indian tribes expelled from India, Sailendra dynasty (732): Borobudur
    - Cambodia: colonized after Indian traders via the Melong, Khmer empire: new capital of Angkor (910) and Angkor Wat (1130)
    - Thailand

What the Indians knew

Piero Scaruffi

Copyright 2018

<http://www.scaruffi.com/know>