

# A History of Knowledge

## **Oldest Knowledge**

**What the Sumerians knew**

**What the Babylonians knew**

**What the Hittites knew**

**What the Persians knew**

**What the Egyptians knew**

**What the Indians knew**

**What the Chinese knew**

**What the Greeks knew**

**What the Phoenicians knew**

**What the Romans knew**

**What the Barbarians knew**

**What the Jews knew**

**What the Christians knew**

**Tang & Sung China**

**Medieval India**

**What the Japanese knew**

**What the Muslims knew**

**The Middle Ages**

**Ming & Manchu China**

**The Renaissance**

**The Industrial Age**

**The Victorian Age**

**The Modern World**

# Medieval India

**Piero Scaruffi**  
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# What the Indians knew

- **Bibliography**
  - **Gordon Johnson: Cultural Atlas of India (1996)**
  - **Henri Stierlin: Hindu India (2002)**
  - **Hermann Goetz: The Art of India (1959)**
  - **Heinrich Zimmer: Philosophies of India (1951)**
  - **Surendranath Dasgupta: A History of Indian Philosophy (1988)**
  - **Richards, John: The Mughal Empire (1995)**

# What the Indians knew

- **Insert pictures of Asian Art Museum**

# India

- **304 BC - 184 BC: Maurya**
- **184 BC - 78 BC: Sunga**
- **78 AD -233: Kushan**
- **318 - 528: Gupta**
- **550 - 1190 : Chalukya**
- **Hoysala (1020-1342)**
- **1192-1526: Delhi sultanate**
- **1526-1707: Moghul**
- **1707-1802: Maratha**

# What the Indians knew

- Tantra
  - 10<sup>th</sup> c
  - Influenced by Bhakti movement
  - Mainly central and south India
  - Ancient practice to worship the mother goddess through sexual intercourse
  - Group intercourse
  - Kundalini power
  - Hinduism = devotion (Bhakti), knowledge (Vedanta) and action (Tantra)



# What the Indians knew

- **Tantra**
  - **Esoteric Hinduism**
  - **Dialogues between the god Shiva and his wife Parvati**
  - **Reversals of Hindu social practices (e.g., incest)**
  - **Reversals of physiological processes**
  - **Forbidden substances are eaten and forbidden sexual acts are performed ritually**
  - **"Five m's": maithuna ("intercourse"), matsya ("fish"), mansa ("flesh"), mudra ("grain"), mada ("wine")**
  - **The chakras of the body as steps in magic**
  - **Increasing psychosexual energy (the serpent power of Kundalini) to achieve the union of the god and the goddess**

# Buddhism

- **Rapid decline of Buddhism in India after the Gupta era**



# Buddhism

- **Tantric/ Vajrayana Buddhism (650 AD)**
  - **Influenced by Hinduist Tantrism**
  - **Female bodhisattvas**
  - **Esoteric**
  - **Mandalas (symbolic maps of the spiritual universe)**
  - **Ritual gestures (mudras)**
  - **Ritual recitations (mantras, eg "om mane padme hum - the jewel is in the lotus")**
  - **Mainly Tibet**

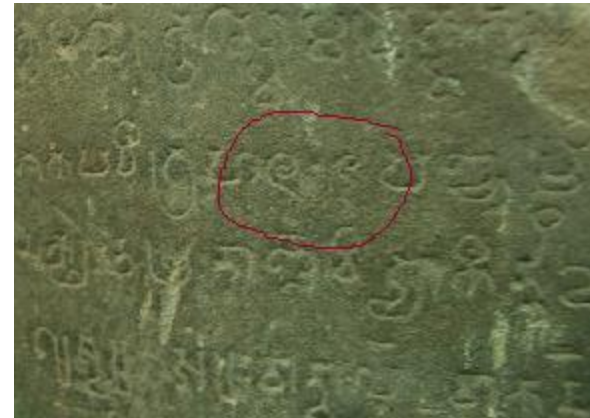
# What the Indians knew

- **Carvaka school (600 AD)**
  - **Materialism and hedonism**
  - **Only one surviving author: Jayarasi Bhatta**
  - **Sacred literature is false**
  - **There is no god, there are no supernatural phenomena**
  - **The soul is not immortal**
  - **Karma is an illusion**
  - **Everything is matter, including mind**
  - **The goal of life should be just to... enjoy it**

# What the Indians knew

- 0: Like all symbols it refers to something, but in this case it refers to nothing.

Inscription K-127, from Sambor on Mekong, the oldest extant representation of zero: the number 605 etched on a Khmer stele (7th c)



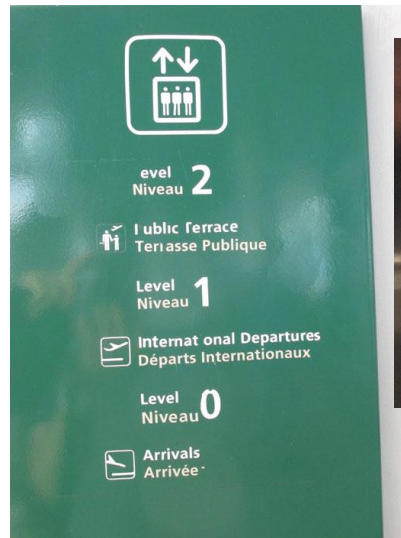
The second oldest extant representation of zero: the number 270 etched in a Gwalior temple (9th c)

# What the Indians knew

- 0: Like all symbols it refers to something, but in this case it refers to nothing.

USA

Europe/ Africa/ Asia/ Latin America



1 km = 1,000 meters = 1,000,000 mms

1 yard = 3 feet

1 foot = 12 inches

# India 625 AD

Sasanians

Dabir

Harshavardhan's  
Empire

Thenasar

Chalukya

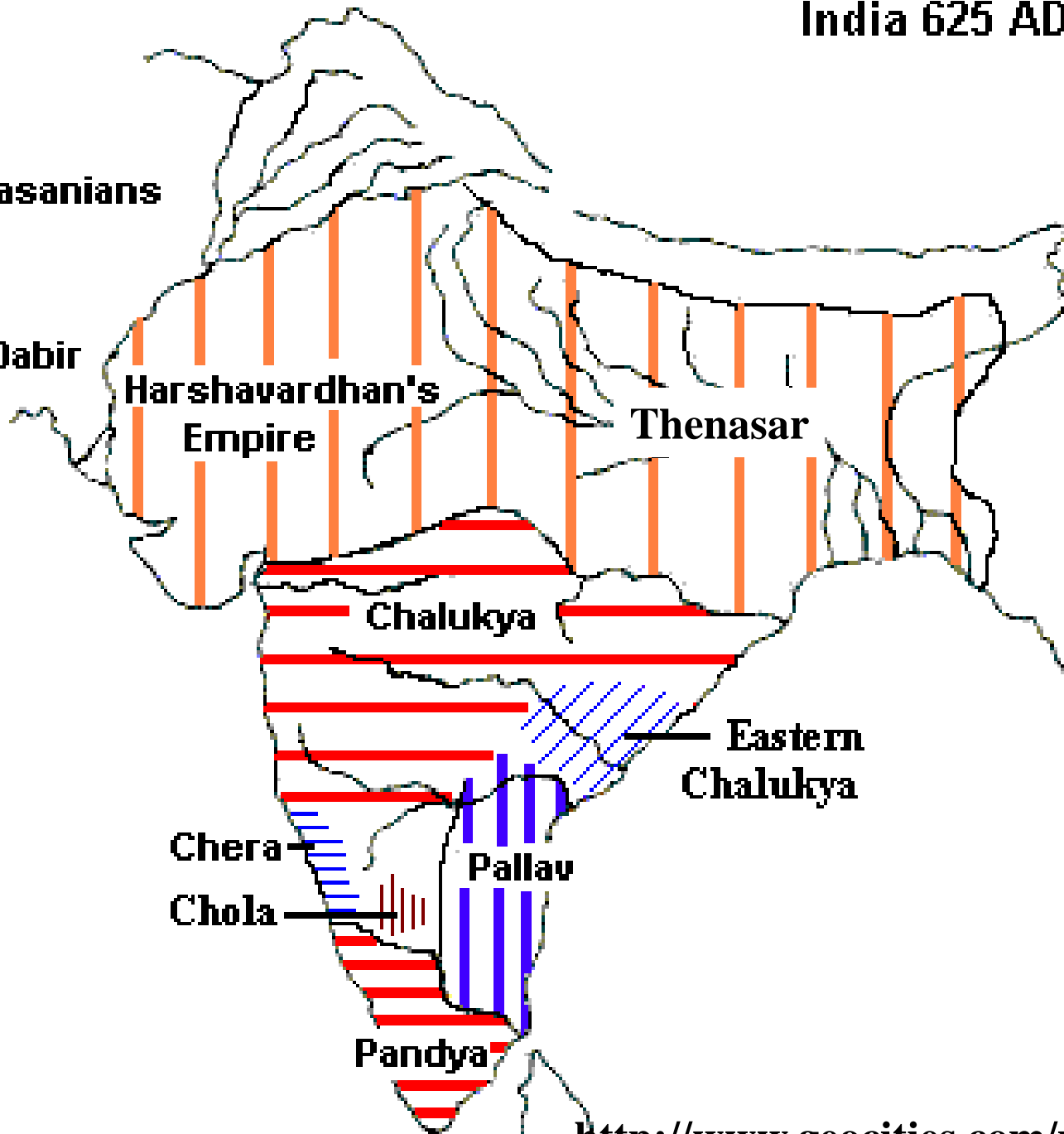
Eastern  
Chalukya

Chera

Chola

Pallav

Pandya



# What the Indians knew

- **Chalukya art:**
  - **Badami**
  - **Aihole**
  - **Pattadakal**

# What the Indians knew

- **Pallava art:**
  - **Mamallapuram temples (7th-8th c)**
  - **Kanchipuram**
- **Shailodehas 7th-8th**

# What the Indians knew

- Rashtrakuta





# What the Indians knew

- **Elephanta caves**



# Kailasa Temple, Ellora (757 AD)



# India

- **711: the Arabs conquer Sindh and Multan (Pakistan)**
- **800: kingdoms are created in central India and in Rajasthan by Rajputs (warlords)**

# South India

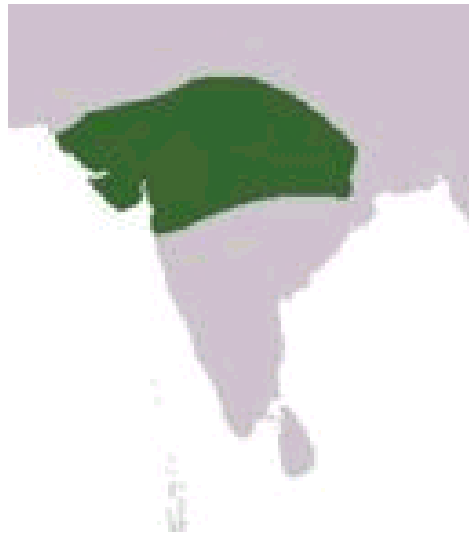


- Pandyan (southern India and Sri Lanka, 0 to 15th c)
- Chola (southern India and Indonesia, 0 to 13th c)
- Pallava (southeastern Indian, 4th to 9th c)
- Chalukya (south-central India, 6th to 12th c)



# India

- Pala (eastern India, 8th to 12th c)
- Pratihara (northern India, 6th to 11th c)
- Rastrakutas (southwestern, 8th to 10th c)
- Hoysala (south India, 1020-1342)



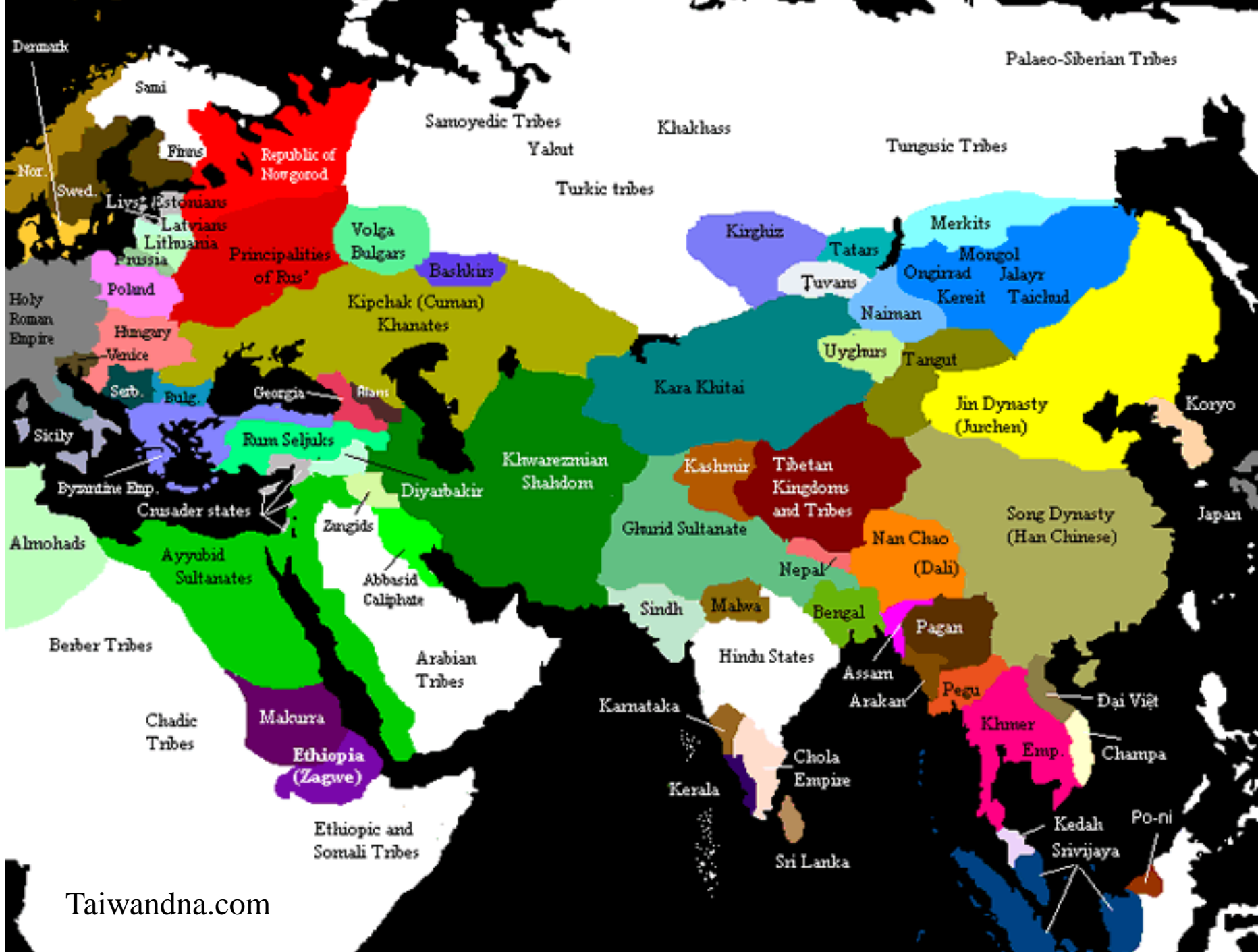
# India

- Vijayanagara (south India, 1336-1646)
- Nayak (south India, 1559-1736)
- Bijapur (southwestern India, 1347-1686)



# India

- Vijayanagara (south India, 1336-1646)
  - South India's agricultural and industrial boom
  - South India self-sufficient
  - South India has little need for foreign goods
  - South India does not engage in sea trade
  - South India invests in large-scale agriculture
  - The Indian ocean is left to Muslims in the west and Chinese in the east





# India

- After the fall of Vijayanagara no Hindu empire until the 20<sup>th</sup> century



Hampi

# India

- Central East Coast:
  - Somavamshis 10-11th
  - Eastern Gangas 1038-1568

# What the Indians knew

- Summary of Indian art periods
  - see [www.scaruffi.com/travel/art.html](http://www.scaruffi.com/travel/art.html)

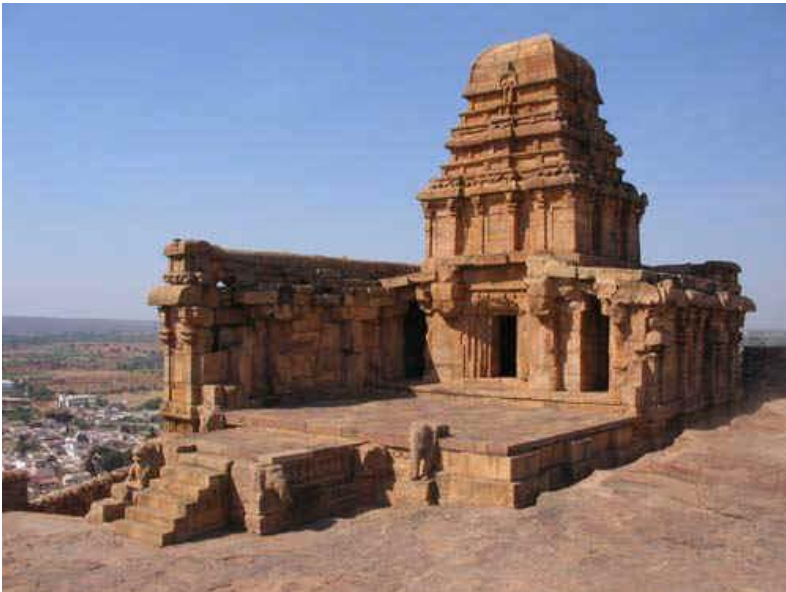
# What the Indians knew

- Pallava dynasty
  - Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism
  - Patrons of music, painting and poetry
  - Mahamalla's temples at Mamallapuram (7<sup>th</sup> c)



# What the Indians knew

- Chalukya dynasty
  - Pulakeshin II (610-42) builds free-standing temples at Badami and Aihole



# What the Indians knew

- Chola dynasty
  - Incarnation of Vishnu but mostly worship Shiva (Vishnu worships Shiva)

# What the Indians knew

- Rashtrakuta dynasty
  - Kailasa temple to Shiva at Ellora
  - Replica of Mt Kailash



# What the Indians knew

- South-Indian Bhakti (8th-11th c AD)
  - Taittiriya's *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*: supreme devotion to a personal god as a path to one's spiritual progress and mentions of shiva as an adjective
  - *Bhagavad Gita*: karma yoga, jnana yoga AND bhakti yoga (bhakti as an alternative to action and knowledge)
  - *Narada Bhakti Sutra*
  - Bhakti as personal devotion threatens the power of the brahmins
  - Shift from Vedic sacrifice (brahmins) to temple-based devotion (influence of Buddhism)



# What the Indians knew

- South-Indian Bhakti (8th-11th c AD)
  - Bhakti poetry and devotion written in Tamil
    - Saiva Nayanars/ Nayanmars/ நாயன்மார்கள் (4th-10th c AD): teachers of Shiva (63 of them)
      - Three are women, including Karaikkal Ammaiyar
    - Vaisnava Alvars (3rd-9th c AD): teachers of Vishnu (12 of them)
      - Compiled in Nalayira Divya Prabandham/ நாலாயிரத் திவ்வியப் பிரபந்தம் (4,000 verses)
      - Included: Nammalwar (9<sup>th</sup> c): Tiruvayumoli (1102 verses)
      - Only one woman, Antal

# What the Indians knew

- South-Indian Bhakti (8th-11th c AD)
  - Bhakti monotheism of 6th c introduces the concept of blasphemy in India
  - Conflicts between Hindus and Jains and Buddhists
  - The "*Bhagavad Gita*" becomes the holy text of monotheistic Hinduism
  - Krishna-theism
  - Islamic (monotheistic) influence

# What the Indians knew

- South-Indian bhakti (8th-11th c AD)
  - Hymns in Tamil by two groups of poets, Nayanars (worshippers of Shiva) and Alvars (worshippers of Vishnu)
  - New form of bhakti, associated with singing in the languages of the common people (not sanskrit) and passionately (almost erotically) intense
  - Sense of unrestrained joy, expressed in music and dance
  - The god's dancing girls (devadasis, sometimes also prostitutes)
  - Bhakti poets (writing in vernacular, not sanskrit, and therefore belonging to any class, not only brahmin)

# What the Indians knew

- South-Indian bhakti (8th-11th c AD)
  - Popular deities for bhakti
    - Vishnu
    - Shiva
    - Devi/ Durga/ Parvati/ Lakshmi/ Saraswati
    - Ganesha
    - Surya
    - Subrahmanya

# What the Indians knew

- South-Indian bhakti (8th-11th c AD)
  - Larger temple complexes
  - Regional styles
    - Orissa (Lingaraja temple of Bhubaneswar, 1000; Sun Temple of Konarak, mid-13th c)
    - Khajuraho (Kingdom of Bundelkhand, 11th c)
    - South Indian (Rajarajesvara temple of Thanjavur/Tanjore, 10th c)
    - Great walled temple complexes of South India: small cities containing several shrines, bathing tanks, administrative offices, residences of the temple employees, workshops, bazaars, schools, banks, etc.

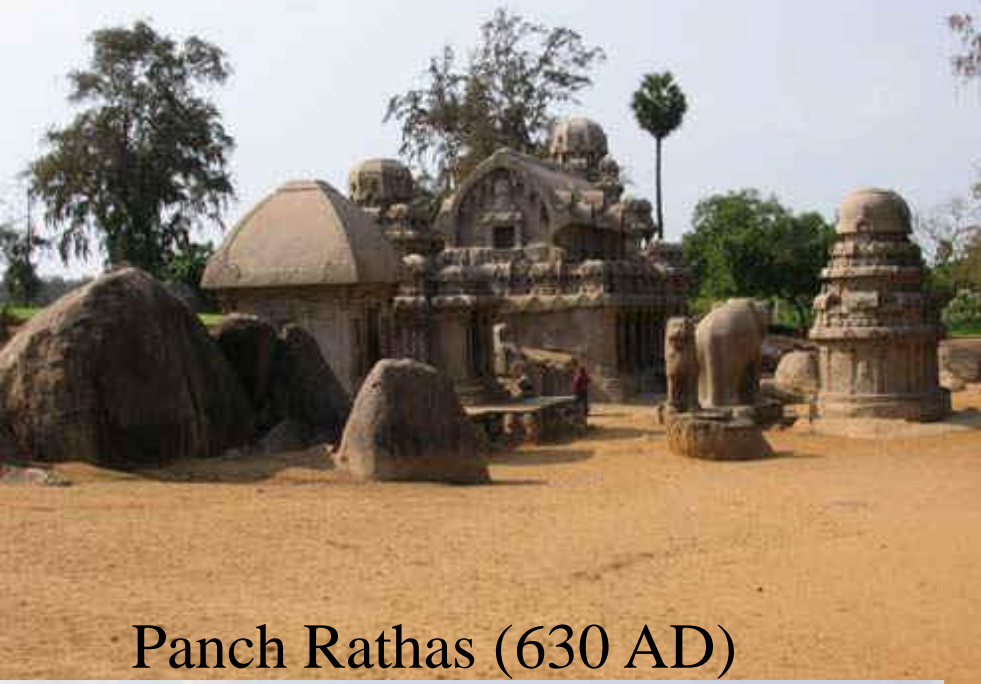
# What the Indians knew

- South-Indian bhakti (8th-11th c AD)
  - Vimana + mandapas + gopuras
  - Erotic reliefs (the celestial “apsaras” of the afterlife)

Bhubaneswar: Parashurameshvara  
(7th century)



Panch Rathas (630 AD)



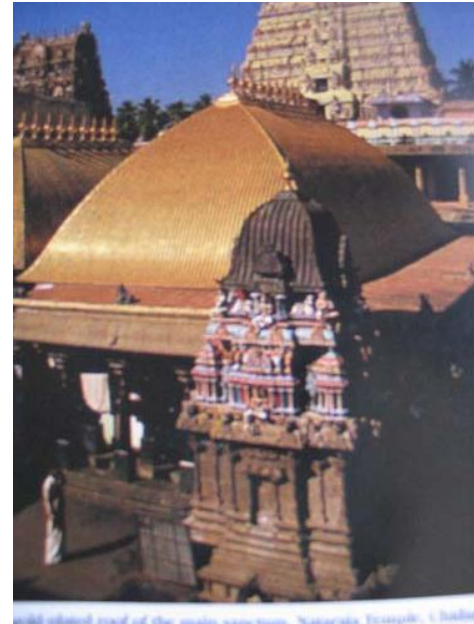
Kanchipuram: Kailasanatha  
(8th century)



Pattadakal: Mallikarjuna temple (745)



Chidambaram: Nataraja (9th c)



Thanjavur: Brihadiswara temple (1000)





Bhubaneswar :  
Muktesvara (11th c)



Brahmesvara: Bhubaneswar (11th c)



Halebid: Hoysaleswara temple (1150)



Belur: Chennakeshava temple (1117)



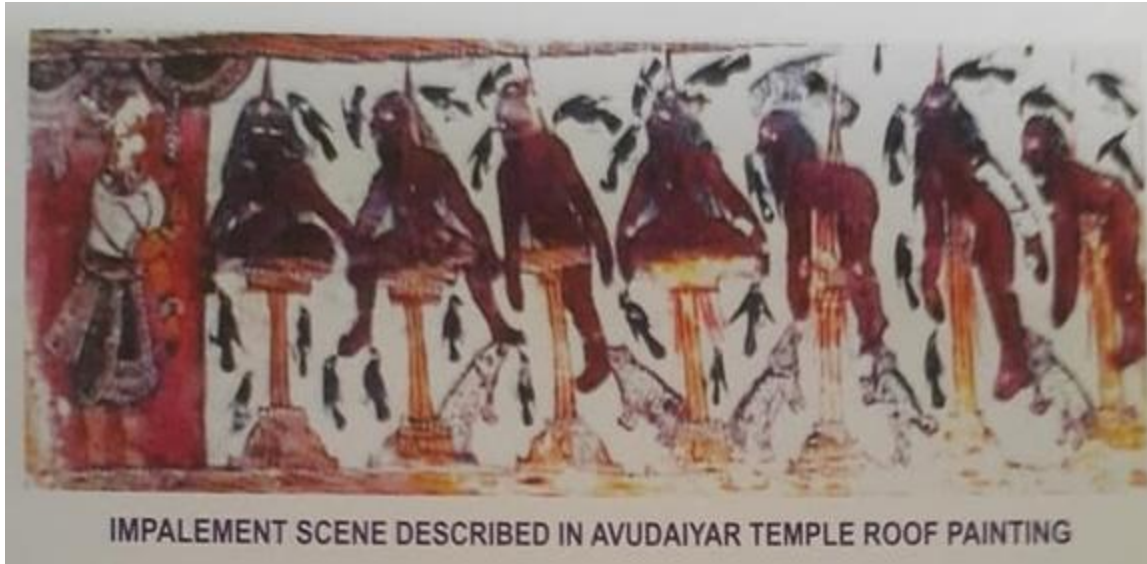
omnatpur:



Somnatpur: Keshava temple (1268 AD)

# What the Indians knew

- Persecution of Jainas in south India
  - Hindu texts boast of impaling Jainas



IMPALEMENT SCENE DESCRIBED IN AVUDAIYAR TEMPLE ROOF PAINTING



# Jodhpur

# What the Indians knew

- Adi Shankara (Kerala, 788AD)
  - Vedanta Advaita (non-dualist) school of monotheism
  - Unifying view of the Hindu religion
  - Only one substance exists, Brahman
  - Atman as pure consciousness and equivalent to Brahman
  - Brahman and Atman are identical
  - The Atman cannot grasp its Brahman nature and the fundamental unity of everything, thus it perceives separate selves and objects and periods
  - “The self cannot be denied because it would be the very self that does the denying” (cfr Descartes)

# What the Indians knew

- **Shankara (b 788AD)**
  - The phenomenal world of selves, objects and time periods is only an appearance (*maya*) that leads to the cycle of karma and samsara
  - Through a process of superimposition (*adhyasa*), the unity formed by atman and Brahman is refracted as a multitude of conscious beings
  - Reality is an indifferentiated unity. It can only be defined by saying what it is not.
  - Reality is immanency: the more permanent something is, the more real it is.
  - The phenomenal world disappears once Brahman is attained (*moksha*)

# What the Indians knew

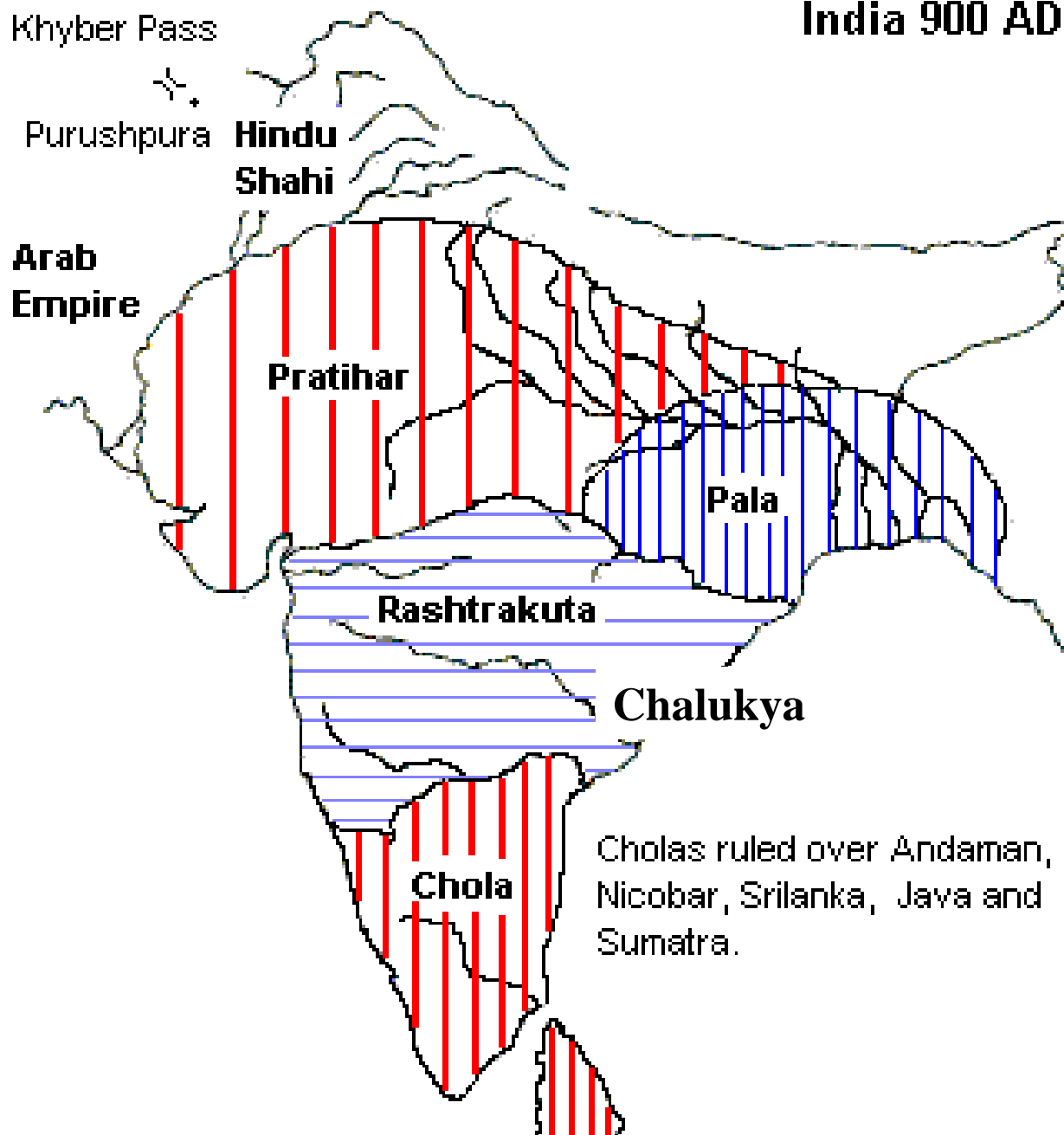
- **Shankara (b 788AD)**
  - **The key to achieving release from samsara is knowledge (jnana), the spontaneous mystical realization of the fundamental oneness of reality**
  - **The Path of Knowledge is the main path to salvation**

# What the Indians knew

- **Shankara (b 788AD)**
  - **Advaita = Buddhist nihilism clothed in Vedic terminology**



# India 900 AD



Cholas ruled over Andaman, Nicobar, Srilanka, Java and Sumatra.

# What the Indians knew

- **Pala-Sena Art (10th-14th c)**
  - **Tantric Buddhism of infinite emanations**
  - **Mysticism, eroticism and symbolism**
  - **All male and female deities emanate from sunyata**
  - **Magic circle (mandala) to evoke the deities**
  - **Cultural center in the Buddhist university of Nalanda in central Bihar (established in the 5th century BC, destroyed in 1199), attended by 5,000 international students**
  - **Pala-Sena influence: Bagan in Burma (esp. Ananda temple), Borobudur in Java, Tibet**

# What the Indians knew

- **Pala-Sena Art (10th-14th c)**
  - **Borobudur**
    - **Buddhist cosmogony**
    - **More than 16kms of relief sculptures**

Potala, Lhasa, Tibet, 17th c



Bagan, Burma, 12th c



## The Indian influence

Borobudur, Java, Indonesia, 8th c



Angkor, Cambodia, 13th c



# The Indian influence



Angkor Wat



Bayon, Angkor,  
Cambodia, 13th c



# What the Indians knew

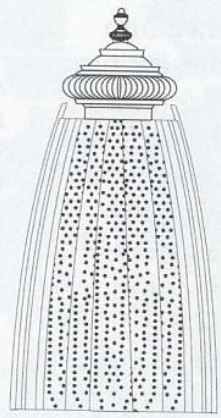
- **Pratihara Art (9th-10th c)**
  - **Temple-cathedrals**
- **Chandella Art (10th-11th c, successor of Pratihara)**
  - **Tantric cult**
  - **Eroticism**



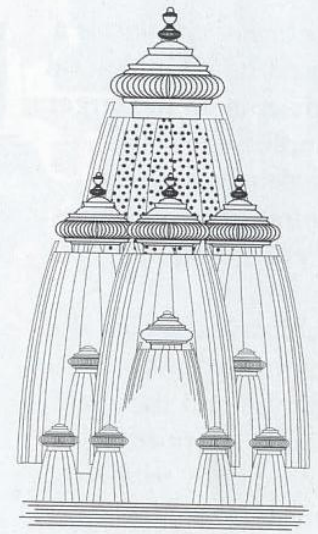
**Khajuraho  
(10th-11th c)**



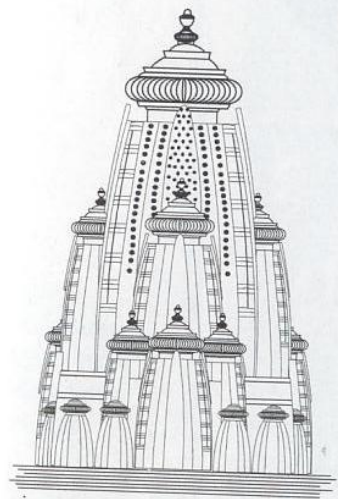
**Development of the *sikhara* in the temples of Khajuraho**



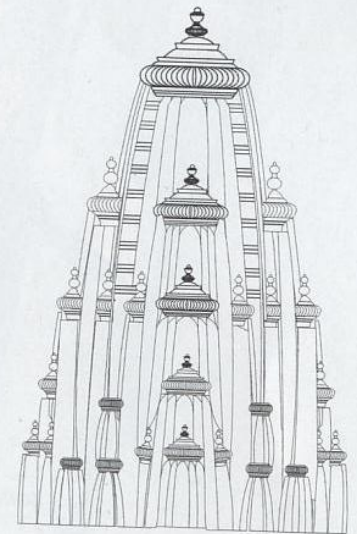
**Adinatha**



**Visvanatha**



**Parsvanatha**



**Kandariya-Mahadeva**

Based on Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu)* Bombay, 1956

# Khajuraho (10th-11th c)



# What the Indians knew

- Chola Art (9th-13th c)
  - Temple-towns (religious, social and economic centers)
  - Five huge imperial temples
    - Chidambaram: Nataraja temple
    - Thanjavur: Brihadiswara temple
  - Tanjur temple (1009)

# India

- 1030: the Solanki kings build the Jain temples at Mount Abu
- 1192: Turkic-speaking chieftains from Afghanistans led by Muhammad of Ghor defeat Prithvi Raj, capture Delhi and establish a Muslim sultanate at Delhi

# India

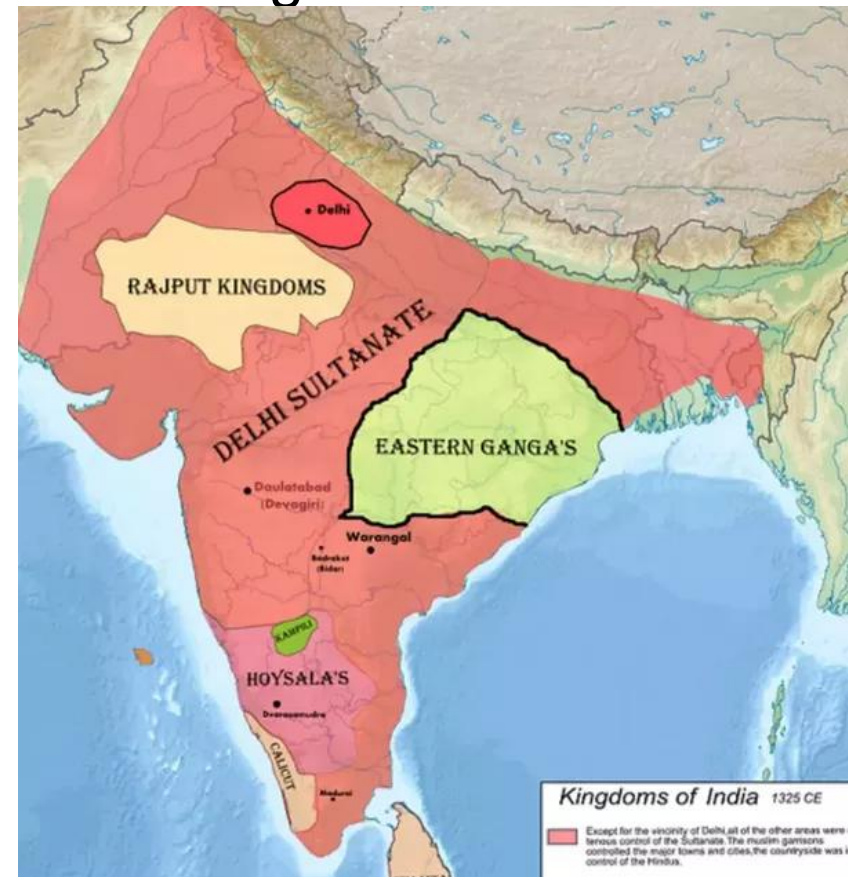
- Mount Abu pictures

# India

- See pictures of Modhera's Sun Temple (11th c)

# India

- 1250: Narasimadeva of the Chodaganga dynasty builds a temple to the Sun in the form of a giant chariot at Konarak



# What the Indians knew

- Abhinavagupta (Kashmir, 975)
  - Kashmir Shaivism
  - Monism
  - God is pure consciousness
  - The selves and the universe emanate from God
  - Both the ultimate subjective reality of the self and the ultimate objective reality of the universe are God
  - “Liberation is the revelation of one’s identity”
  - The identity of the self is consciousness
  - Consciousness makes the universe appear
  - Therefore “Liberation is knowledge”

# What the Indians knew

- “*Yoga Vasishtha*” (Kashmir, 11<sup>th</sup> c)
  - 29,000 verses
  - Pretends to be a leftover of Valmiki’s *Ramayama*
  - A long dialogue between Rama and the sage Vasishtha
  - Kashmir Shaivism
  - Pratijna (“recognition”) school = Shaivism + Buddhism + Shankara
  - Monism

# What the Indians knew

- **Abhinavagupta (Kashmir, 975)**
  - **Experiencing the flavor of a work of art requires not only that the work evoke a response, but also that the experiencer possess the aesthetic sophistication and knowledge required to respond in an appropriate way**
  - **The experience of a work of art is a process of exchange between the creator and the spectator**



# What the Indians knew

- **Abhinavagupta (Kashmir, 975)**
  - There are nine rasa (emotional experience incited by performance, poetry and art): shringara (the erotic), hasya (the comic), karuna (the compassionate or pathetic), raudra (the angry), bibhatasa (the unappealing), vira (the heroic), abhuta (the awe-inspiring), bhayanhaka (the terrifying), and shanta (the peaceful)

# What the Indians knew

- Ramanuja (Kanchipuram, 11th c)
  - Vedanta - Qualified monism (vishishtadvaita)
  - Brahman is God and contains everything that exists
  - Brahman and Atman are not the same
  - The Path of Devotion (bhakti) is the main path to salvation
  - The soul does not become one with God, but simply similar to God
- Madhva (Karnataka, b 1197AD)
  - Vedanta – Dualism (Dvaita): objects exist as well as souls

# What the Indians knew

- Vaishnava schools (commentaries on Vedanta)
  - Vishnusvami (8th c)
  - Ramanuja (11th c): visishta-advaita
  - Nimbarka (12th c)
  - Madhva (13th c): dvaita

# What the Indians knew

- Vasudeva Madhvacharya (b 1238)
  - Dvaita/Tattvavada, one of the three main subschools of Vedanta (with Shankara's Advaita or Nondualism and Ramanuja's Qualified Nondualism or Vishishtadvaita)
  - One of the realist schools (the universe is real not illusion) with Samkhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika and Purva mimamsa, opposed to the idealistic schools (Yogacara, Madhyamika buddhism, Advaita)

# What the Indians knew

- Vasudeva Madhvacharya (b 1238)
  - The plurality of souls is real not an illusion
  - Dualist instead of monist (vs Advaita) but still monotheistic
  - God/Ishvara = Brahman = Vishnu ("brahmashabdashcha vishhnaveva")
  - Distinction between Ishvara (God) and the individual selves (jivas)
  - Both souls and Ishvara exist
  - Souls are not created by Ishvara but depend on him for their existence
  - Ishvara is the efficient cause of the universe but not the material cause

# What the Indians knew

- Vasudeva Madhvacharya (b 1238)
  - The soul/self/consciousness never becomes one with the deity
  - Individual consciousness survives and attains the fullness of the essence of selfhood
  - The state of salvation/moksha is a positive state of being where the consciousness persists

# What the Indians knew

- Vasudeva Madhvacharya (b 1238)
  - Vishnu is the only deity that does not have a body.
  - Other deities (starting with Brahma and Vaju) have bodies
  - Brahman (Vishnu) and Atman (soul) are eternally different, never become one

# What the Indians knew

- Vasudeva Madhvacharya (b 1238)
  - The universe is made of five fundamental differences:
    - between Selves and Brahman
    - between matter and Brahman
    - between one Self and another Self
    - between matter and Selves
    - between matter and matter
  - The plurality is not an illusion but it is reality

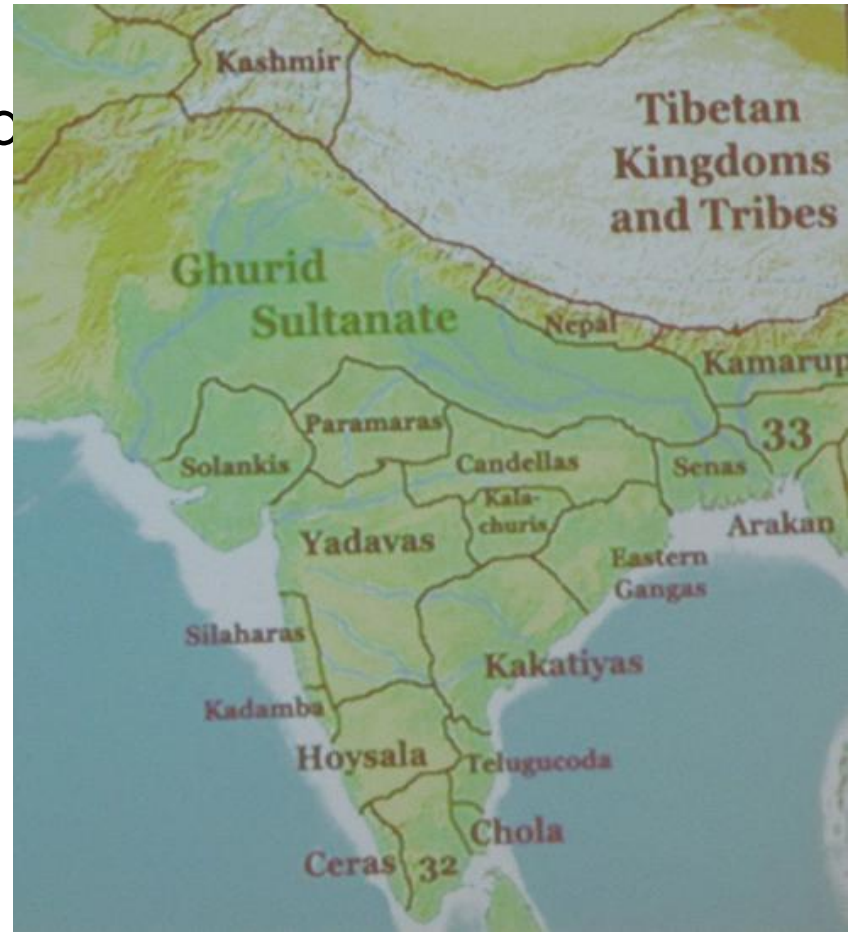


# What the Indians knew

- Vasudeva Madhvacharya (b 1238)
  - Possibility of eternal damnation instead of certainty of eventual salvation:
    - Mukti-yogyas qualify for liberation
    - Nitya-samsarins are subject to eternal rebirth
    - Andhatamas (orTamo-yogyas) are eventually condemned to eternal hell

# What the Indians knew

- Origin of Marathi literature
  - Yadava Empire (1182-1317)
    - Non-Brahmin state
    - The vernacular is adopted in the religious world



# What the Indians knew

- Jnanesvar/ Dnyaneshwar (1290)
  - Commentary written in colloquial Marathi of the “Bhagavad Gita” (written in Sanskrit) using the meter of female work songs
  - The “Bhagavad Gita” was meant as an explanation for the masses of the Vedas, but, written in Sanskrit, could be read only by the higher caste
  - Jnanesvar ‘s commentary fulfills the mission of the BG by making it accessible to women and lower castes

# What the Indians knew

- **Mathematics**
  - **Gelosia multiplication (12th c)**

multiply 543 by 7695.

		7 <sub>2</sub>	6	9	5	
3	1	2   1	1   8	2   7	1   5	5
4	1	2   8	2   4	3   6	2   0	8
5	1	3   5	3   0	4   5	2   5	3
		4	1	7	8	

In the first row we have 3 times 7, 21, then 3 times 6, 18, then 3 times 9, 27, and then 3 times 5, 15. In the second row it's 4 times 7, 28, 4 times 6, 24, 4 times 9, 36, and 4 times 5, 20. And in the last row it's 5 times 7, 35, 5 times 6, 30, 5 times 9, 45, and 5 times 5, 25. Then adding along the diagonal first there is a lonely 5. Then  $7+1+0=8$ . Then  $8+2+6+2+5=23$ , write down the 3, carry the 2. Then  $2+1+1+4+3+5+2=18$ , write down the 8 carry the 1. Then  $1+2+5+3=11$ , write down the 1 carry the 1. Then  $1+3=4$ . Then reading from the bottom around, the answer is 4,178,385.

(Shelley Walsh)

# What the Indians knew

- Jains
  - Pictures of Abu
  - Pictures of Palitana
  - See pictures of Ranakpur (1439)

# What the Indians knew

- Kabir (15<sup>th</sup> c)
  - North Indian Bhakti (Varanasi)

# What the Indians knew



Seated Ganesha from Karnataka 1200-1300  
San Francisco Asian Art Museum



Vishnu from Karnataka 1200-1300  
San Francisco Asian Art Museum

# What the Indians knew

- **Sculpture**



Buddhist deity Vajra Tara from Bihar 1075-1200  
San Francisco Asian Art Museum



# What the Indians knew



Brahma from Tamil Nadu 1000-1200 AD  
San Francisco Asian Art Museum



Brahmani from Tamil Nadu 950 AD  
San Francisco Asian Art Museum

# What the Indians knew

- **Sculpture**



Vishnu, Lakshmi and Saraswati  
(West Bengal, 12th c)

# What the Indians knew

- **Jain Art**
  - **Elaborate temples (representing the celestial assembly)**
  - **Illuminated manuscripts**
  - **Giant pilgrimage paintings**

# What the Indians knew

- **Jain Art**

See

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

# What the Indians knew

- Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka: Sacred Quadrangle (12th century)



# What the Indians knew

- Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka: Gol Vihara (12th century)



# What the Indians knew

- **All invaders of India had come from the northwestern route:**
  - **1600 BC: Indo-Aryans**
  - **327 BC: Alexander**
  - **155 BC: Bactria**
  - **80 BC: Sakas (Scythians)**
  - **78: Kushan**
  - **455: Huns**
  - **997: Ghaznavids**
  - **1192: Ghurids (Delhi sultanate)**
  - **1526: Moghuls**

# What the Tibetans knew

- **Oracles**
- **Bon (shamanism)**
- **Mandala (a profound representation of the nature of the universe)**
- **Gesar: bridging the nomadic culture and Buddhist ideals**
- **Guru Rinpoche/ Padmasambhava (750AD): conversion to Buddhism, Samye monastery**
- **Monastic life**
- **Lamas (1578AD)**



# What the Tibetans knew



Guhyasamaja from Tibet (15th-16th c), Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 9

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- Continued on Part III