There is suffering. There is the cause of suffering. There is the end of suffering. There is the path to the end of suffering. These Four Noble Truths teach suffering and the end of suffering. The Buddha
Once Siddhartha (or the Gautama Buddha) gained enlightenment, he began to preach

The holy eight fold path: right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Four Holy Truths: 1. all existence is suffering, 2. all suffering and rebirth are caused by man’s selfish craving, 3. Nirvana, freedom from suffering, comes from cessation of all craving, and 4. the stopping of all ill and craving comes only from following the Eight Fold Path.

These are the way of the Buddha, the way of Enlightenment.
One reason I’ve directed you to the time-line on the MET website is so you can compare events, styles and cultures across the Silk Road.

Life of the Historic Buddha c. 563-483 BCE
Siddhartha Gautama

Mauryan Empire 323-185 BCE
third Mauryan Emperor-Ashoka, 254 BCE began building monumental edicts on Buddhism carved into pillars, rocks and caves, and is credited with building 84,000 stupas to enshrine the holy relics (ashes) of the Buddha and commemorate the important events of the historic Buddha.

Contemporary: Classical Greece (Plato, Socrates) In China (Confucius, Laozi)

Kushan Empire 100 BCE-200 CE
importance of Silk Road, Gandaharan region multiethnic, tolerance, flourishing of art and Buddhism
Conquered by Alexander the Great

Gupta Period 300-500 CE
sometimes referred to as a Golden Age, witnessed the creation of an "ideal image" of the Buddha.
Corresponds with Constantine in Rome
Mauryan Empire  323-185 BCE
third Mauryan Emperor-Ashoka, 254 BCE began building monumental edicts on Buddhism carved into pillars, rocks and caves, and is credited with building 84,000 stupas to enshrine the holy relics (ashes) of the Buddha and commemorate the important events of the historic Buddha.

Contemporary: Classical Greece (Plato, Socrates) In China (Confucius, Laozì)
Yakshi, detail of eastern gateway, Great Stupa, Sanchi, India, mid first century BCE to early first century CE.

Last week we looked at the sculpture on the Great Stupa at Sanchi for the beginnings of Buddhist art and style.
We discussed how the visual image and style related to this much earlier sculpture of the Little Dancer from Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan, ca. 2600–1900 BCE.
We also talked about how these earlier sculptural forms were the basis for the first images of the Buddha in human form.

Top. Male torso, Early Indus Valley—2500 BCE note body style.

Yaksha, 1st century, Kushan period, India.
We also talked about how these Yaksha and Yakshi figures, connected to nature worship, fertility and abundance, were also the visual source for Hindu sculpture.

Shunga Period
3rd-2nd Century BCE
The Development of Images

We heard last week that the Buddha himself did not support images in human form.

However, as time goes on, the popularity of image-making, especially images of a human Buddha are linked to the traditional Buddhist desire to earn merit.
In this case merit is accumulated by causing images to be created.

While wandering monks and priests had little use of images, lay followers needed both guidance and visual reminders…
The debate over when the first images occurred is ongoing but it can be said that image-making was known in the Indus Valley with the first images of the Buddha appearing by the first century BCE.

Sources are Indian, a combination of ancient meditative, yogic ideals and earlier yaksha figures.
They represent the practice in Indian art of using images as protectors and emblems of abundance...

**Female attendant, 1st century, India.**

The yakshi remained prominent in Indian art but these voluptuous females seldom appear in Buddhist art unless under direct Indian influence.
The development can be traced from Ashokas columns, continued by narrative reliefs, the jataka tales and events of the life of the Buddha on the gates of the stupas and then the numerous male and female fertility images.

In both Bharhut and Sanchi are standing male and female figures...some adopt poses of adoration with hands clasped at chest, other carry objects...regardless of their titles, they share common characteristics, involving fertility.
The fertility figures became especially prominent during the Kushan period (late 1st cent BCE to late 3rd cent CE)

**Kushan Empire 100 BCE-200 CE**
- importance of Silk Road,
- Gandaharan region multiethnic,
- tolerance, flourishing of art and Buddhism
- Conquered by Alexander the Great
Equally powerful, the male yaksha was less consciously sensual.

These are images of prosperity associated with agrarian cultures.

They provided the ideal for subsequent images in the Buddhist pantheon, including the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.
The growing schism resulting in the Mahayana school, created the need for additional images.

This process was aided by the political and cultural changes brought about by the mixture of people migrating into the area… mostly the Kushan people from Central Asia.

Buddha, late 1st Century, Mathura region
The Kushan kingdom was centered in two areas… one around Mathura, in the north-central India and the other in Gandhara.

In Mathura there appeared sandstone images of the Buddha, similar to the yaksha figures on Bharhut and Sanchi.

Compare the Buddha, late 1st Century, Mathura region, with earlier yaksha.
The **Kushan Empire** originally formed in the 1st century CE in the territories of ancient Bactria on either side of the middle course of the Oxus River in what is now northern Afghanistan, and southern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The kings of Kushan had diplomatic contacts with Rome, Persia and Han China. The empire declined from the 3rd century, and fell to the Gupta Empire in the 4th.
The earlier Kushan Images focused on capturing the ideals of yogic control. The body is represented as a container of the ‘vital breath’, rather than replicas of the physical body.

This Kushan Buddha references earlier works from the Indus Valley Civilizations.
The Indian Buddha image portrays the traditional figure of the meditative yogi, transcendent in metal powers but part of the world.

At the same time he is surrounded by images of radiance and abundance…the sun disc and trees, the throne supported by lions, and two attendants emphasize his royal position.

Buddha seated on lion throne, from Mathura, India, second century CE. Red sandstone, 2’ 3 1/2” high. Archaeological Museum, Muttra.
While the humble robe, yogic posture and gesture of reassurance embody the spiritual message.

Standing Buddha and seated Buddha, Mathura
At the same time, in the north-western region of Gandhara, the area where Alexander the Great ended his eastern march, there appeared a different stylistic version of the Buddha.
In Contrast—
The Gandharan Buddha, despite having many of the same attributes (the lion throne, the yogic posture and radiant nimbus) remains a mixture of Roman styles.

Most striking is the toga, an inappropriate garment for the climate of India…and the facial features which indicate an interest in realism.

Meditating Buddha, from Gandhara, Pakistan, second century CE. Gray schist, 3’ 7 1/2” high. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.
Two examples of Greek Art. Notice the attention to naturalistic depictions of the human body.
Gandharan art continued throughout most of the first thousand years in Afghanistan and at least until the end of the 18th century. The area had become a second holy land for Buddhist, visited by pilgrims from south and east Asia, enhanced by the belief that early events in the Buddha’s life had occurred there.

Meditating Buddha, from Gandhara, Pakistan, second century CE. Gray schist, 3’ 7 1/2” high. Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.
n Standing Buddha and Emaciated Buddha, from Gandhara, Pakistan, second century CE.
Many of the earliest images of the Buddha were accompanied by pairs of bodhisattvas (enlightened beings), most of who later became the focus of their own cults.
Bodhisattvas had wealth and affluence and were shown with beautiful robes, jewels, etc. In addition objects were often carried or displayed to identify each.
Bodhisattva, Pakistan, 2nd/3rd Century compare to early yaksha
The Gupta dynasty, like the Kushan and Mauryan before, was established in Northern India. From 320 to the 7th century remains the standard of comparison between India and the rest of Asia.

For Buddhism, the Gupta period signaled the decline of Buddhism in India. Besides the monastic establishments being attacked by marauding tribes, the more powerful, dynastically supported Hinduism assimilated the Buddhist faith.

The Mahayana emphasis on salvation by faith had served to bring Buddhism closer to Hinduism and the fewer differences allowed Buddhism to be absorbed by Hindu practices in India.

By the end of the Gupta period, most of the growth of Buddhism was taking place outside of India.
The Gupta Buddha is shown in the teaching mudra. No longer appearing heavy like the *yaksha* images, this is a person of great spiritual bearing. An evolution from the earthly Shakyamuni to the ethereal, spiritual figure we see here.

Attention is directed to the meaning of the faith, instead of the person of the Buddha.

Abstracted and simplified, all extraneous details are eliminated. Attracted to his quiet gaze, hands and face. Designed to go beyond the event being portrayed, the First Sermon, to a transcendent dimension found in Mahayana Buddhism.


As interest and worship of Bodhisattvas increased, also the idea of the Buddha as a truly celestial figure grew.

As a result of the cosmic view of Mt. Meru as linked with the heavens, the appearance of the Colossal Buddhas in India and throughout northern countries from Afghanistan to Japan are seen.

Colossal Buddha, 5th century, Kanheri, India
One of the most famous is this Colossal Buddha in the Bamiyan Valley Afghanistan.

The area contains numerous Buddhist monastic sanctuaries many with wall paintings, as well as fortified edifices from the Islamic period.

The site is also testimony to the tragic destruction by the Taliban of the two standing Buddha statues in March 2001.

Colossal Buddha, 5th-6th century, Afghanistan, destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban.
Originally gilded with gold and copper masks, two colossal images from Afghanistan are most spectacular, visible to pilgrims from miles away. The sense of splendor was enhanced by wall paintings.

Colossal Buddha, 5th-6th century, Afghanistan, destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban.
This valley was along the Silk Road making the sculptures and rock cut temples important places for both Buddhist pilgrims and merchants.

Colossal Buddha, 5th-6th century, Afghanistan, destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban.
Different from that of a humble, meditative teacher, the Buddha had become an awesome, transcendent vision....reflecting the importance Mahayana Buddhism placed on the heavenly realm even suggesting the rewards awaiting those who managed to be reborn in such a paradise.

A Chinese couple recreated with laser projection, what the statue in Afghanistan must have looked like. 2015
Buddha, Yangon, China