

# Overview



## Hindu and Buddhist

p. 7-17 Hindu Art

p. 7-28 Buddhist Art

## HINDU— Indus Valley

As discussed in an earlier lecture, the first artwork we have from the Indus Valley come from the early Harappa and Mohenjo Daro civilizations.

The images were mostly animals and female figure. Both were connected to the early indigenous beliefs.

Between 1800 and 1200 BCE Indo-European people, the Aryans (Sanskrit meaning 'noble'), entered the Indian subcontinent bringing their sacred hymns called the Vedas (Knowledge).

A number of the gods are **personifications of** natural forces.

**Note: personification means**—the attribution of human characteristics to something non-human.



*This map shows the present borders of India, including Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro Civilizations in present day Pakistan. The Aryan people came from the West, Mesopotamia.*

## HINDU –Early Indus Valley

I've included a couple of images as a reminder of the early ones, predating the Hindu gods and goddesses who came later. We looked at some of these last week. The main thing to remember here is that ideas and beliefs come from somewhere. Most are passed from culture to culture, generation to generation.

### What we are looking for is an understanding of:

1. the threads that connect beliefs to those of the past
2. Which ideas come from somewhere else and are imposed on a civilization or group of people .
3. Those which are unique to that group.



*Seated Mother Goddess, Indus Valley; me at the Chicago Art Institute, Buddhist and Hindu section.*



*Bull caved from stone and Bull seal, from Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan, ca. 2600–1900 BCE.*

## HISTORY— IMPORTANT side note

While we are taking time to look at the Indus Valley civilization, their art and beliefs, some of the connections to artwork go back much farther to Prehistoric times.

We are going back in history in an attempt to understand that while Hindu art took these earlier ideas in one direction, the roots of the ideas are also in our own.

Animals and female fertility figures are some of the earliest examples of artwork made by human beings.

These predate our studies of Hindu art by 10s of thousands of years.

Compare dates to the ones on the previous slide.



*Cave Painting, Lascaux, France c.10,000BCE*  
*Venus of Willendorf, c. 23,000BCE and Lion Man, c. 32,000 BCE*





## HINDU— Back to the Vedic Texts

Many of the gods of the Vedas are personifications of natural forces. The Vedic hymns praise powerful deities such as:

1. Indra, the god of thunder and rain and patron deity of war
2. Surya, the solar god
3. Agni, the god of fire

In keeping with the Vedic origins, Hinduism is polytheistic, giving power to a number of deities.

While present day Hinduism focuses on three main deities, understanding the pantheon of earlier ones, helps us understand the stories.



In the early years of the Indus Valley, no artwork depicting these Vedic gods exists.

They show up much later in Hindu art as the predecessors to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. This is an image of Agni, god of fire in the Vedas...one of the eight guardians of the directions. Recognized by flaming hair and ram. This one is from the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, India.

## INDUS VALLEY— Roots of Hindu Art

We looked at these images last week. They are stone seals used to mark items for trade. Because Indus Valley seals have been found within Central Asia, the Arabian peninsula and Mesopotamia, they indicate an extensive long distance trading network.

Most have letters at the top and animals in the center. They are thought to perhaps note the identity of a factory or tradesman.

Over 3500 seals have been found so far and some contain a human figure in the center, seated in a yogic position. Majestic Bulls or lions standing before an altar, suggest connection to cult of animals from prehistoric times.



Seals with bulls and seated figure in yogic posture, from Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan, ca. 2600–1900 BCE.

## INDUS VALLY— Roots of Hindu Art

These seals have come to be associated with Pashupati—The Horned God, *Lord of Animals* is a precursor of the god Shiva (or even an earlier god, Ruda).

This square seal depicts a nude male deity with three faces, seated in yogic position on a throne, wearing bangles on both arms and an elaborate headdress. Five symbols of the Indus script appear above the headdress which is made of two outward projecting buffalo style curved horns, with upward projecting points.

This seal also has a number of animals, including bull, elephant and lion, surrounding the central figure.

A piece of the seal is broken in the bottom right corner.



Seal with seated figure in yogic posture, from Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan, ca. 3000–1900 BCE. Steatite coated with alkali and baked, approx. 1 3/8" X 1 3/8". National Museum, New Delhi.



## INDUS VALLY— Roots of Hindu Art

Ten bangles are depicted on the left arm and we can only see 5 before the break on the left, with the hands resting on the knees, pointing to the earth. The heels are pressed together under the groin and the feet project beyond the edge of the throne. The feet of the throne are carved with the hoof of a bovine as is seen on the other seals.

It is difficult to see in the slides but in each case, attention has been paid to the phallus. While the figure has rather elaborate jewelry, it has appeared to many archeologists that his phallus is exposed and erect. This has been contested by some others saying it could be a tassel or belt.



Seal with seated figure in yogic posture, from Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan, ca. 3000–1900 BCE. Steatite coated with alkali and baked, approx. 1 3/8" X 1 3/8". National Museum, New Delhi.



## HINDU ART—

As we move forward in time, we will continue to see the emphasis on Bulls, such as Nandi, the bull mount of Shiva and Parvati.

Many of the Hindu gods have 'mounts' or animals they ride. Here we see a large scale bronze sculpture of Nandi alone as he is worshiped in his own right. (Notice the person in the lower left corner for scale.)

In the other sculpture we see Shiva and Parvati (his wife) riding together on Nandi.



## HINDU ART--connections

As I mentioned last week, we continue to see the influence of figures like this one in later Hindu art.

Here, Vishnu assumes the yogic pose but has also presented himself as one of his avatars, the man-lion.



This is a bronze statue of Vishnu in his man-lion incarnation as Yoga-Narasimha. It's from India 1250 CE



## HINDU ART--connections

Early prehistoric figure of females with large breasts and stomachs, emphasized vulva with small arms and no face, are believed to represent fertility and regeneration through the female body.

These Hindu images to the right, continue this tradition using different images.



These two sculptures are from Hindu temples. The top is Shakti as lotus headed fertility goddess Below: a Yoni from a temple in Vietnam . More about this later.



Prehistoric fertility figure, one from Europe one from Russia. c25,000 BCE



## HISTORY— THE VEDAS

By the middle of 2000 BCE the Indus Valley Civilization declined.

Horse riding Aryan people swept across what is now Northern India and Pakistan.

They left no art but did bring the Sanskrit language, that of the later Hindu scriptures. And they composed the Vedas (or book of Knowledge).

As we have discussed, their major gods were: Indra, god of the skies (rides an elephant), Varuna, god of the oceans, and Agni, god of fire.—all placated by fire and animal sacrifice.

No artwork of these deities exists from this time.

They show up later in relation to stories of Shiva and Vishnu.

There are many stories and sculptures of these earlier Vedic gods as they battle with or aid, the new ones.

## IMPORTANT STORIES—

The Upanishads (more philosophically based) and then the Brahmanas (more practical) became the next source for images as they developed after the Vedic texts. All were originally transmitted orally as songs before being written down.

The Upanishads are considered to be the most important literature in Indian history. They form the spiritual core of Hinduism, some of which are shared with Jainism and Buddhism.

Scholars are unsure of the exact date of the first of the stories but believe the earliest of the 200 are thought to date from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. As you can see— much later than the Vedas.



## IMPORTANT STORIES—

The next important scripts are the *Ramayana* and Mahabharata.

These were epic stories, also oral, that were only later written down.

These stories assume the existence of divine figures who manifest themselves to their human worshipers in a variety of ways.

The two paintings to the right are from the Ramaya and Bhagadvata Purna, they tell stories of Krishna and Rama, both incarnations of Vishnu (his body is blue).

It is in these stories that the idea of the *avatara*, or divine 'descent', occurs. This is when a god assumes the form of something else. In this case Vishnu assumes the form of Rama and Krishna.



Krishna illuminated manuscript painting from the Bhagadvata Purana (chronicles the major incarnations of the god Vishnu), 16th century



Rama sends out the monkey army to find Sita, from the Ramayana.



## HINDUISM

The personalities of Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti do not appear until the second century CE even though they are mentioned and worshiped earlier in the Upanishads.

This is the true beginning of Hindu Art.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, Bhakti provided the basis for images. Devotees are encouraged to enter into relationship with the deity.

The Bhagavad Gita, *the Song of the Lord*, are a set of hymns and stories that, together with the Ramayana and Mahabharata shape the complex personalities and aspects of the different Hindu deities.

We will talk about this more later.



Krisna in his cosmic form displaying all of creation in his body.  
This is described in the Bhagavad Gita.

## HINDU HISTORY—

The Bhagavata Purana written in the 10<sup>th</sup> century gave a complete account of the Krishna story, which became an important source for Hindu Art.

Hinduism was profoundly interrupted by Islam in India with the Muslim invasion (12<sup>th</sup> century).

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Hinduism emerged again. With this emergence comes regional interests. Different parts of India focus on different stories. In northern India, in particular, they concentrated on the worship of Krishna and Rama and the traditions of the Ramayan epic.

As we move through the class, we will see how these changes, the new stories and changing rituals affect the way the artworks look.

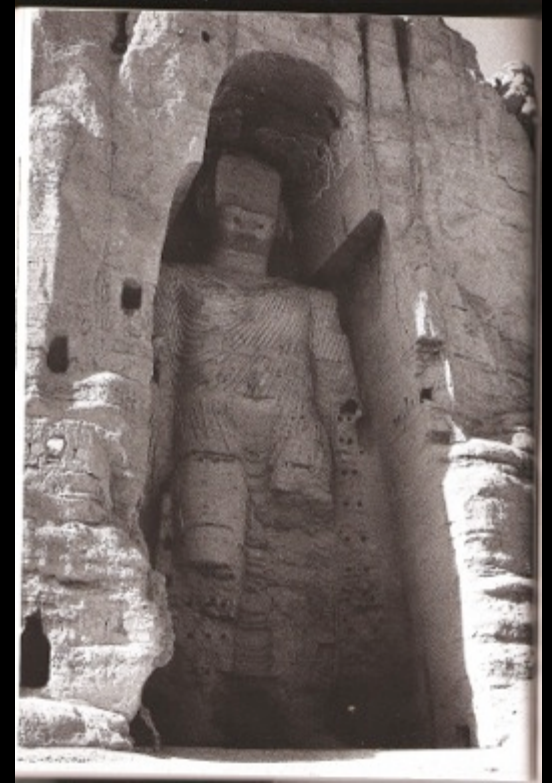


This painting, depicting aerial combat between Krishna and Indra, is from a Mughal court in Agra or Lahore.

The Hindu painting from the Deli-Agra region underwent radical transformation in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century due to the rise of the Mughal court. *More about that later.*



# The Buddha





## BUDDHISM-INTRODUCTION

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines religion as "the service and adoration of God or a god expressed in forms of worship."

Most people make the relationship between religion and god.

There are no gods in Buddhism, even though Buddhists sometimes attribute special powers to the Buddha.

The tradition begins simply with a human being...Siddhartha Gautama...who founded a solution to the problem of human suffering.

## BUDDHISM-INTRODUCTION

Buddhists focus on his experience, and they deny the existence of a single, almighty god.

Many religious traditions emphasize the importance of an immortal soul.

But this is not the case for Buddhism: Buddhists say that a human personality is like a river or a raging fire, the personality is constantly changing and the idea of an immortal soul is simply an illusion that human beings impose on a process of change.

In the same way individuals change, Buddhism also is constantly changing.

## BUDDHISM-INTRODUCTION

Buddhism began in India and flourished there for 1,000 years.

By the 6th and 7th Centuries it was absorbed by a revival of Hinduism.

However, the faith was introduced to other Southeast Asian countries, including China and Japan.

Now, even though it is not practiced widely in India, it is viewed 'as the single shared experience of half the world's population' including Nepal, Tibet, Burma, and Sri Lanka.

It was able to adapt to and evolve within different cultures and existing beliefs.



You might have noticed I like to show maps. Because most of us who live in the U.S. are geographically challenged, being exposed to maps helps us understand relationships between countries in other parts of the world.

It's particularly important with Buddhism since we will be tracking the belief system from India to other parts of Southeast Asia.

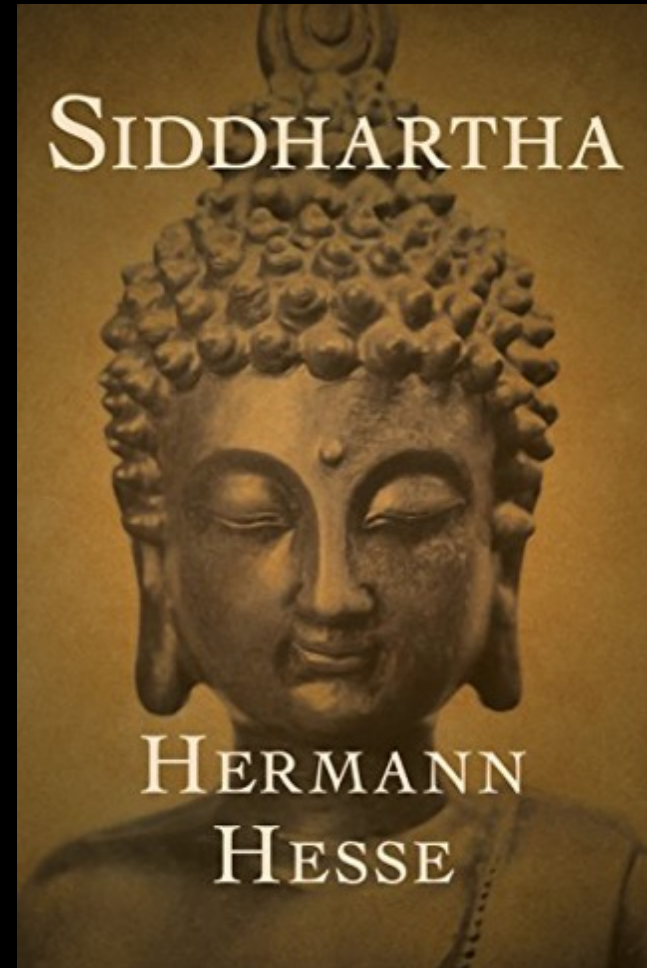


## A VERY BRIEF INTRODUCTION INTO THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

Born as Siddhartha Gautama in a princely family in northern India about 566 BCE, he was called, The Buddha or the “Awakened One.”

He left his family’s palace and took up life as an Indian ascetic. After years of difficult struggle, he sat under a tree and “woke up” to the cause of suffering and to its final cessation.

He then preached this ‘Dharma’ or teaching to his disciples.



Some of you may know this story from the book, Siddhartha, by Hermann Hesse. It is often read in High School literature class.

## BUDDHISM-- belief

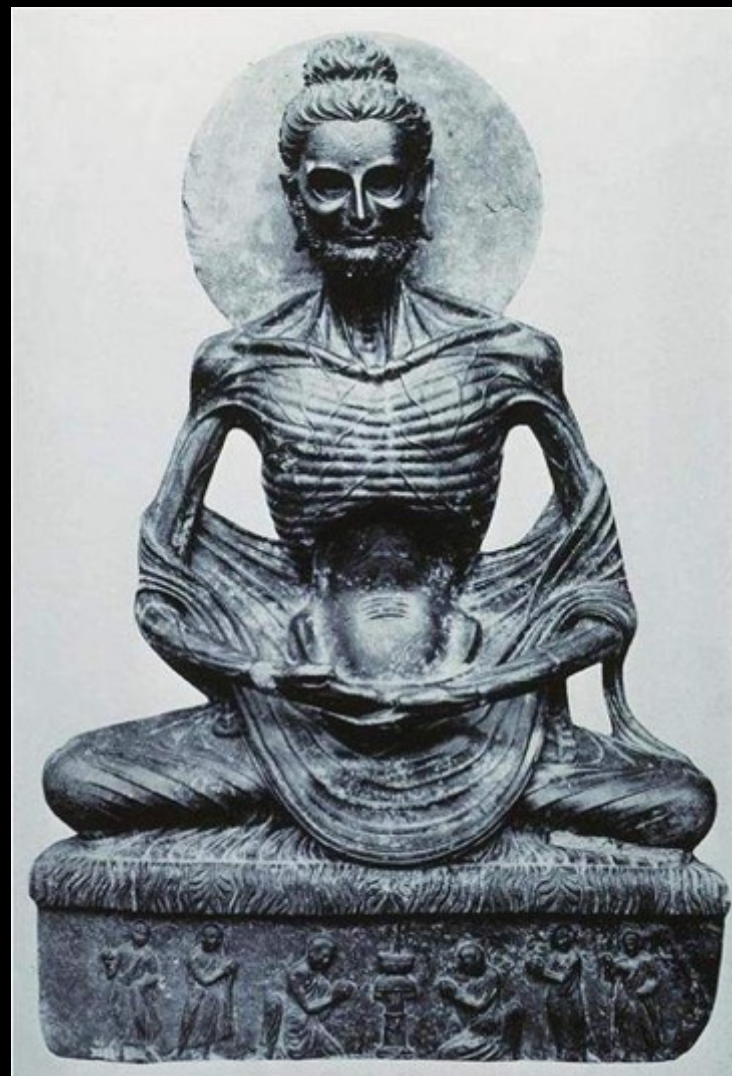
The main doctrinal change in Buddhism was that salvation was available to all instead of those who renounced the material world to pursue a life of monastic dedication.

We even see in the story of the life of the Buddha, he tries to become an ascetic monk, fasting for 6 years.

His conclusion-- this isn't the way.

He then meditated under the Bodhi tree until he found enlightenment.

Because of the fundamental belief that suffering is caused by egocentric desires and the goal is to shed those delusions, the images reflect expressions of serenity...an individual beyond mortal weakness and selfish craving.



*Fasting Buddha (Emaciated Buddha),*  
Kushan Dynasty, Gandhara (Pakistan),  
2nd-3rd century, schist. Lahore  
Museum, Punjab, Pakistan :

## BUDDHIST REFORM

It would be historically incorrect to say that Siddhartha Gautama saw himself as a religious leader or that he consciously set out to start a new religious movement.

He considered himself a teacher who rejected the ways of traditional Hindu religious orthodoxy and offered his followers a different path.

He considered the many Vedic rites and ceremonies to be pointless and abusive and he was also against the caste system, stressing the equality among all people.

For this reason, we see many images of the Buddha teaching the dharma.



*Seated Buddha preaching first sermon, from Sarnath, India, second half of fifth century. Tan sandstone, 5' 3" high. Archaeological Museum, Sarnath.*



## BUDDHIST REFORM

While many of the teachings and messages of the Buddha are found in previous Indian beliefs, the one aspect of the message of the Buddha which seems original is humanism:

the insight that human beings are ultimately responsible for their fate and that no supernatural forces, no magic rituals, and no gods can be held accountable for our actions.

*Side notes:*

*Much later in history, Humanist ideas also fueled ideas of the Renaissance in Italy (1400-1600). During that period artists and thinker were shifting from a Religious view of the world—God is responsible for everything— to a human centered one— humans are responsible for their own fate. This is the belief we inherited.*



The hand with a wheel on the palm symbolizes *Ahimsa* in Jainism. The wheel represents the *dharmachakra*, which stands for the resolve to halt the *saṃsāra* (transmigration) through relentless pursuit of truth and nonviolence

## AFTER THE DEATH OF THE BUDDHA

The community shifted from the Buddha to his teachings after he died.

Monks gathered to establish a canon of scriptures, with much dispute.

The Buddhist King Asoka, who reigned from 268 to 239 BCE, attempted to unify his kingdom in India under Buddhism. He then sent the first missionaries to Sri Lanka to establish the belief there.

From this the **Theravada** (tradition of the elders) grew.

*The **Theravada** tradition focused images on the life of the historic Buddha, Shakyamuni, his former lives, and **the Jataka Tales**, which related episodes in the life of the Buddha that would serve as a role-model for humans.*



Ashokan pillar in Nepal. Ashoka had many pillars with inscriptions related to the Buddhist faith built around India and Sri Lanka.

## MAHAYANA SCHOOL

Eventually, there was a schism, marked by the emergence of the **Mahayana school**.

The **Mahayanists** placed more importance on personal devotion and the universal opportunity for salvation and in the prominence of the **bodhisattva**, a savior figure whose accumulated merit could be shared with the worshipper, aiding the progress towards salvation.

Within the **Mahayana tradition**, we begin to see more figures represented. In particular, the bodhisattva, became very popular. The Mahayana also emphasized the three realms—earth, heaven and celestial realms. This allowed for very complex images to evolve.

In similar ways that Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, etc), Islam (Sunni, Shi and Sufi) and Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) have different denominations or sects within the faiths, Buddhism did as well.

This division came over time as people expanded the belief to incorporate other ideas.



## ESOTERIC BUDDHISM TANTRA OR VAJRAYANA

The next split is the Tantra or Vajrayana (Diamond Vehicle), based on the idea that the sensory, phenomenal world was not to be dismissed as illusory (as it was in older schools) but rather found insight in daily, physical events. Many rituals and practices associated with Tantra.

Esoteric schools such as Tibetan Buddhism or Shingon in Japan, used images to aid meditation, including using yoga, chanting (mantras) and gestures (mudras) as ways to link the real world with the higher one.

True awareness came from insight and personal experience, aided by rituals as opposed to orthodox learning.

*When we get to this part of the course, the artwork becomes really complex.*



This is a Tibetan Thangka painting.  
Very different than the images of the historic Buddha.

## ALL MOVEMENTS SHARE A GOAL

**The goal is to end the cycles of birth and death.**

## BUDDHISM MOVES BEYOND INDIA

In the 2nd Century Buddhism entered Tibet where we see a combination of the indigenous Bon, Indian monasticism and Tantric practice.

Buddhism entered China in the 2nd Century when the Chinese people had become disillusioned with traditional Confucian values. Buddhism borrowed Taoist vocabulary to express Buddhist ideas.

Buddhism entered Japan in the 6th Century and soon became allied with the Japanese state. Convinced they were living in a 'degenerate age', the reformers brought a powerful new vision of Buddhism to the masses.







In the early years of Buddhism there were no representations of the Buddha. Instead, the Buddha was represented by symbols. All were symbols associated in some way with the historic Buddha like, pillars, trees, thrones, wheels, animals and stupas, or to fertility. Eventually we begin to see images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas.

On the image at the far left, the Buddha is symbolized by lions, in the center, individuals worshipping the wheel, and a very popular symbol, the footprint of the Buddha.





Two of many 'feet prints' of the Buddha.  
Presumably, identifying where the historic Buddha walked, they also contain wheels.  
Below, a relief sculpture showing the Buddha as a tree.



Wheels and deer symbolize the sermon in Deer Park where the Historic Buddha gave his first sermon. Setting in motion the wheel of law.



## ALL MOVEMENTS SHARE A GOAL

The emphasis on higher goals of yoga—result in images in relaxed poses and transcendence.

They emphasized a youthfulness unaffected by time.

The Buddha, the Awakened One, is often depicted sitting in a serene pose, with feet crossed in front of him and hands in one of a few mudras---the picture of calm and contemplation.

He has a cranial protuberance (emblem of superior mental powers) elongated ears (indicating he used to wear expensive earrings) with a wheel and/or lotus.

Since the goal of Buddhism is the transcendence of this delusionary world, the images are highly idealized.



Seated Buddha preaching first sermon, from Sarnath, India, second half of fifth century. Tan sandstone, 5' 3" high. Archaeological Museum, Sarnath.



## ARTWORK DEPICTS THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

In art we see limited representations of certain episodes in the life of the Buddha:

- birth
- moment of enlightenment
- teaching
- final triumph—death

This image depicts all the moments from the life of the Historic Buddha in one carving. From the bottom to the top: Birth, enlightenment, teaching then death.

Within the Theravada Tradition, we only see images of one of these stories from the life of the historic Buddha.

And when represented, other than changes in style, the Buddha is basically the same.



*Life of the Buddha, stele, c. 475*

Gupta period, India

Sandstone

Page 14 in the book.



## ARTWORK DEPICTS THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

Indian affinity for nature led to images with attributes related to the natural world...lions, banyan trees, deer, lotus flower, eyes that follow the shape of the lotus leaf, etc..

Deities are known to worshippers by their responsibilities and attributes, poses and gestures.



Here are two images of the historic Buddha from the Theravada tradition. One is from India the other Nepal.



**Shakyamuni, the Historical Buddha**  
Nepal, 12th century , Copper alloy, gilt

Shakyamuni (the historical Buddha) –to the left- he's teaching– top-- meditation, reassurance, enlightenment (touching the ground).

## ARTWORK DEPICTS THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

Most of the revered objects are associated with the life of the historical Buddha.

The early growth of Buddhism after his death in around 481 BCE was enhanced by the Indian King Ashoka's distribution of his ashes inside 84,000 stupas.

The Great Stupa at Sarnath,

We will look at this in more depth later. -



The stupa then becomes an actual site, as in this one, a public place where Buddhist come for pilgrimage, to pray and meditate.

And, smaller, reliquary objects, used for meditation in a more private way.



## THE FEMALE IN BUDDHISM

Because both Buddhism and Hinduism grew out of the Indus Valley Civilization, there are many connections and the early history is the same.

We have looked at the mother goddess figures before.

Female figure and the goddess were overshadowed by male deities during the Vedic period, they re-emerged taking various forms.

Among the earliest female figures in Buddhist art were the Yakshas and Yakshis, sensuous images of fertility and abundance.



Proto-Hindu mother goddesses, Mohenjo Daro, 3000 BCE



Seated Mother Goddess, India, 1st century



Yakshi, or river goddess, 1st century. Afghanistan  
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## THE FEMALE IN BUDDHISM

With Esoteric Buddhism (Tantric) in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the female has assumed much greater stature.

Ranging from gentle consorts to complex, multi-limbed and horrific visions of power.

In the Vajrayana, the Buddhist form of Tantrism, the female symbolized wisdom and was often depicted with a more active male deity, identified with compassion.

*To the right is an image of Tara, on the Met website. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Tara is a compassionate protectress, often paired with the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Farther right is a Tonga painting of the goddess of the white umbrella. She has 1,000 arms and feet to better protect.*



Yakshi, or river goddess, we will see many as representative of nature elements.



## WATER THEMES

Here in the West, the snake is most often associated with the Creation story related to Adam and Eve.

As a result, the snake is viewed as and often depicted as evil or as a demon.

In Southeastern beliefs, the snake has a very different meaning and role to play. The Naga ( Sanskrit: “serpent”) in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, is a member of a class of mythical semi-divine beings, half human and half cobra.

They are a strong species who can assume either wholly human or wholly serpentine form and are potentially dangerous but often beneficial to humans.



## WATER THEMES

As a result we will see many images of the Buddha being protected by the snake or Naga.

*These snake gods show up with the Hindu gods as well. You may remember the sculpture of Vishnu with the snake behind his head.*

A story is told that four weeks after Gautama Buddha began meditating the heavens darkened, for seven days it rained. However, the mighty King of Serpents, Mucalinda, came from beneath the earth and protected him with his hood. As a result, there are many images of the Buddha being protected by the Naga King.





## THE IRONY OF IMAGES

So, the Buddhist faith, despite having a founder who had not supported the making of images and instead, preached a doctrine against material possessions, acquired the world's richest and most varied system of visual support.

## REVIEW

This week we looked at some history that led to early Hindu and Buddhist beliefs.

We also did an overview of the subjects we will examine in more depth as we continue through the semester in both Hinduism and Buddhism. When you write your annotation, be specific.

## NEXT WEEK

Next week we begin the actual time-line history of Buddhism with Chapter 1 in our book.

For Hinduism, we finish chapter 1 and begin a little of chapter 2. I moved a little ahead in this lecture so I'll keep going a little in the next.