

# HINDU



Temples. Images. Rulers.

p.64-102 Hindu Art

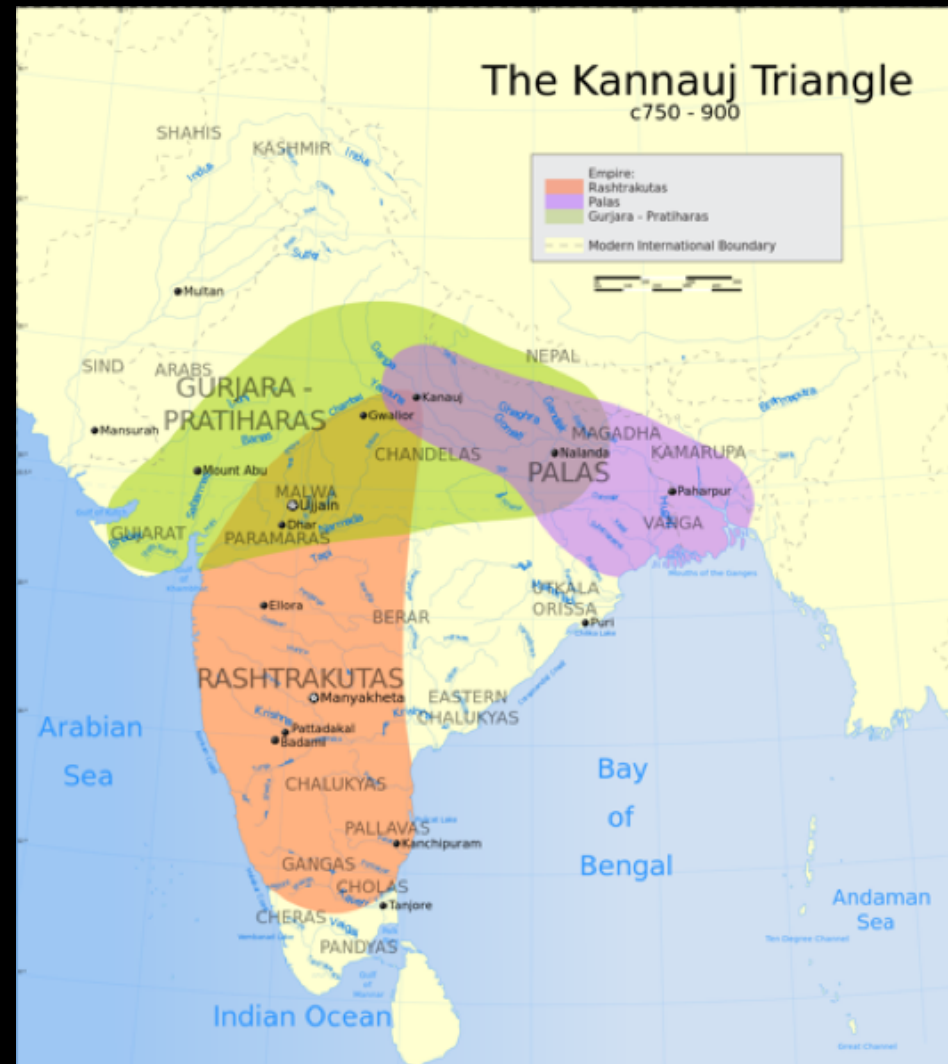
## INDIA 6<sup>TH</sup> -9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY HINDUISM

In this chapter we are reminded that the India we know today, is not the India of these earlier centuries.

Different areas of the country were controlled by different rulers. We actually talked about this in the Buddhist lecture from a couple of weeks back.

By the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Hindu gods replaced those of the Buddha.

An emperor reunited India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century after the decline of the Gupta dynasty. His empire fell after his death and these three contested for control of India: Rashtrakutas, Guriara-Prathiharas and Palas



This map shows the three main empires during the medieval period: the Rashtrakutas, Guriara-Prathiharas and Palas.

## INDIA 6<sup>TH</sup> -9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY HINDUISM

We have already talked about how the sacred images of Hinduism are based on myths and legends, , such as the *Bhagavata Puranas* (Including the *Bhagavad Gita*) and *Gita Govinda*, literary sources, such as *Ramayana* and others.

Deities triumphing over their adversaries proliferate in Hindu art. This is a way to remind the faithful of the power of their Hindu gods.

Sometimes the compositions are marked by conspicuous violence. The gods battle, and win, through violent combat.



This painting, depicting aerial combat between Krishna (the Hindu god) and Indra (the earlier Vedic god), is from a Mughal court in Agra or Lahore. *We talk about that later.* The violence is emphasized by the cloudy sky and agitated draperies worn by the gods.

## INDIA 6<sup>TH</sup> -9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY HINDUISM

Other than representations of icons of deities and their myths, there are many themes that have a crucial role to play in the magical protection of the religious monuments.

The temples are thought to shield from negative forces so they need guardian figures.

Temples are places to be with the gods. So people come to the temple to pray, knowing the gods are there.

The following empire, the Maitrakas and Pratiharas continued temple building in a similar style as the Gupta. The addition was more sculpture and the scale was much smaller.



**Harihara Temple1 at Osian in Rajasthan, Pratihara period.**

The complex comprises five shrines marked by shikhara towers covered by tiers of arch motifs.





## INDIA 6<sup>TH</sup> -9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY HINDUISM

In the Southern part of India begins the rock-cut tradition. We have already seen rock cut architecture in Ajanta. Later we see the addition of sculptural elements in the architecture.

All temples may have been executed under the patronage of the local Maurya and Kalachuri rulers but documentation is lacking.

The first ones we look at are the **Elephanta** caves, which are a network of sculpted caves located on Elephanta Island, or *Gharapuri* (literally "the city of caves") in Mumbai Harbour, 10 kilometres (6.2 mi) to the east of the city of Mumbai in the Indian state of Maharashtra.

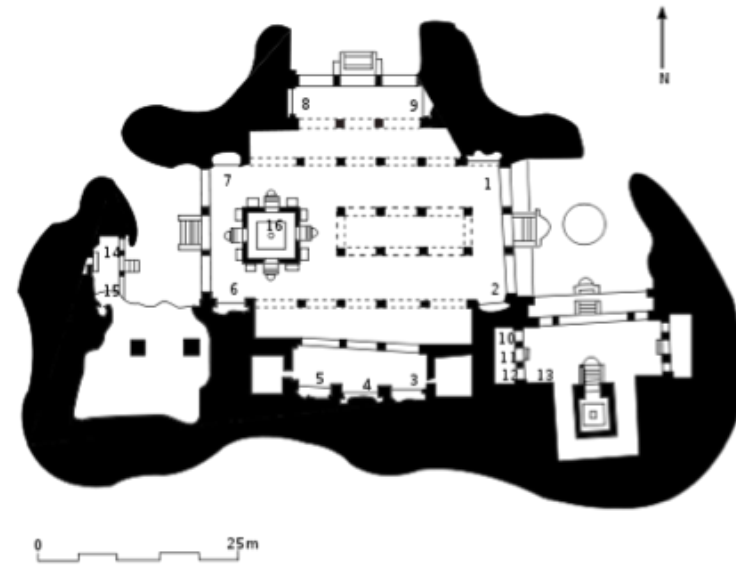


## HINDUISM\_ELEPHANTA CAVE

The island, located on an arm of the Arabian Sea, consists of two groups of caves—the first is a large group of five Hindu caves, the second, a smaller group of two Buddhist caves.

The Hindu caves contain rock cut stone sculptures, representing the Shaiva Hindu sect, dedicated to the god Shiva.

The rock cut architecture of the caves has been dated to between the 5th and 8th centuries, although the identity of the original builders is still a subject of debate. The caves are carved from solid basalt rock. All the caves were also originally painted to make them look more realistic, but now only traces of paint remains.



Elephanta cave complex ground plan and entrance.



## HINDUISM\_ELEPHANTA

Since no inscriptions on any of the caves on the island have been discovered, the ancient history of the island is conjectural, at best.

Local tradition holds that the caves are not man-made. The story is that Pandava, the hero of the Hindu epic Mahabharata, and a demon devotee of Shiva are both credited with building temples or cut caves.

In reality we know that rulers from this time supported the construction of temples as a testament to their power.

At Elephanta, as in other rock-cut architecture we've seen, all elements are carved into rock. Even the columns that appear to be holding up the roof and sculpture.



I really like this image because it shows the columns and shrine cut out of the mountain and at the same time, an image with people in worship.

**This way you can see the scale.**



## HINDUISM\_ELEPHANTA

The island has two groups of caves in the rock-cut architectural style. The caves are carved from solid basalt, a common volcanic rock.

The larger group of caves, which consists of five caves on the western hill of the island, is well known for its Hindu sculptures, many dedicated to Shiva.



Shiva as Mahadeva, Cave 1, Elephanta, India, ca. 550–575. Basalt, Shiva 17' 10" high.

To the left is a linga shrine in the distance, dedicated to Shiva (as we know) protected by guardians.



## HINDUISM\_ELEPHANTA

Ardhanarishvara, translates into the god (Shiva), half female. In the Hindu mythology, the Ardhanarishvara represents a composite androgynous form of Shiva with his partner, Parvathi (Shakti). There are many stories as to how this happens--- here's one:



Once many sages came to their home in Kailash to pay their respect to Lord Shiva and Parvathi. One of the sages called Bhiringi refused to bow and pay respect because Parvathi was sitting besides Shiva. He was staunch devotee of Shiva, so he would not bow to anyone other than Shiva.

This made Parvathi angry and she turns him into a skeleton of bones. He is then unable to stand so, taking pity on him, Shiva gives him a third leg to balance on. Bhiringi precariously stands on his three legs and starts dancing around Shiva in devotion. This made Parvathi jealous and angry. She does penance and merged with Shiva's body to challenge Bhiringi.

**Now he cannot bow to Shiva without also bowing to Parvathi. ☺**

Shiva at Elephanta Caves, in Male and Female form, Ardhanarishvara.

## HINDUISM\_DURGA TEMPLE

Durga Temple, at Aihole in Karnataka, 8th Century.  
The temple has an unusual semicircular-ended sanctuary and surrounding colonnade.

Dedicated to the Hindu goddess, Durga, this temple is typical of Hindu temples that mix various forms.



Durga Temple, at Aihole in Karnataka, 8th Century.  
The temple has an unusual semicircular-ended sanctuary and surrounding colonnade.

In the cross cut plan to the left, notice that these temples have an entrance porch and various different rooms with sculptures related to the goddess. The most sacred is in the center. The Shikhara, or tower, rises above this sacred inner sanctum.





## HINDUISM\_DURGA TEMPLE

The Story: It is said that the growing menace of demons became unbearable for the natives so the Sage Indrakila practiced severe penance, and when the goddess appeared the sage pleaded with her to reside on his head and keep vigil on the wicked demons.

As per his wishes to kill the demons, Goddess Durga made Indrakila her permanent abode.

Later, She also slayed the demon king Mahishasura freeing the people of Vijayawada from evil.

She is often seen slaying the buffalo demon.

**Notice her body style. You may recognize the shape as related to the Yakshi.**



Durga slaying the buffalo demon, Durga Temple, Aihole in Karnataka



## HINDUISM\_DURGA

Durga is a manifestation of Shakti (also Parvati). She is a popular Hindu warrior goddess whose mythology comes from combating evils and demonic forces that threaten peace.

She is also a fierce form of the protective mother goddess who will unleash her anger against wrong and destruction to empower creation.

She is often depicted with (or riding on) a lion with many arms to carry weapons to defeat Mahishasura, the buffalo demon.

She is a central deity in Shaktism. In one text she is celebrated as the Supreme Being and creator of the universe.



Durga slaying the buffalo demon, Durga Temple, Aihole in Karnataka

## HINDUISM\_DURGA TEMPLE

Shiva with Nandi (the bull), from the Durga temple.

The subtle modeling of the god and elegant posture are representative of Chalukya art (eighth century).

Because Durga is a manifestation of Shakti, the wife of Shiva, it makes sense he is represented here.



Interior, Durga Temple. Note: this temple is also cut from rock.  
Also: note his body style as related to the Yaksha.



## HINDUISM\_ELLORA CAVES

Ellora is known for *Hindu, Buddhist and Jain cave temples* built during (6th and 9th centuries) the rule of the Kalachuri, Chalukya and Rashtrakuta dynasties. The three different beliefs represented here indicate the spirit of tolerance of the time. They are located in the India state of Maharashtra.



There are 34 monasteries and temples dug side by side in a high basalt cliff.

This phase of building from 600 to 1000 brings the civilization of India back to life. This is one of the largest rock-cut architecture monastary-temple structures in the world.



## HINDUISM\_ELLORA

It was initially thought that the Buddhist caves were one of the earliest structures, created between the fifth and eighth centuries, with caves 1-5 in the first phase (400-600) and 6-12 in the later phase (mid 7th-mid 8th), but now it is clear to the modern scholars that some of the Hindu caves (27,29,21,28,19,26,20,17 and 14) precede these caves.

The earliest Buddhist cave is Cave 6, followed by 5,2,3,5 (right wing), 4,7,8,10 and 9. Caves 11 and 12 were the last. All the Buddhist caves were constructed between 630-700.



The many different caves, cut from the side of a mountain are carved to look like traditional architecture with all sculptures and elements carved in place.

## HINDUISM\_ELLORA

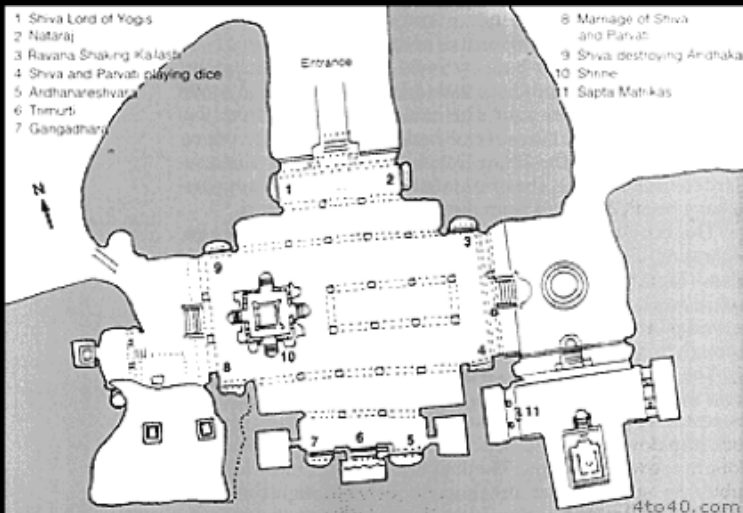
Ellora represents the epitome of Indian rock-cut architecture. The 34 "caves" are actually structures excavated out of the vertical face of the Charanandri hills.

Notice the area leading up to the hillside. The cave temples could be seen from far away.



Kailasanatha Temple at Ellora, Rashtrakuta period, 8th-9th century.

To the left is a ground plan of the main temple. Notice the different areas with sculpture especially the holy inner chamber containing the shrine to Shiva.



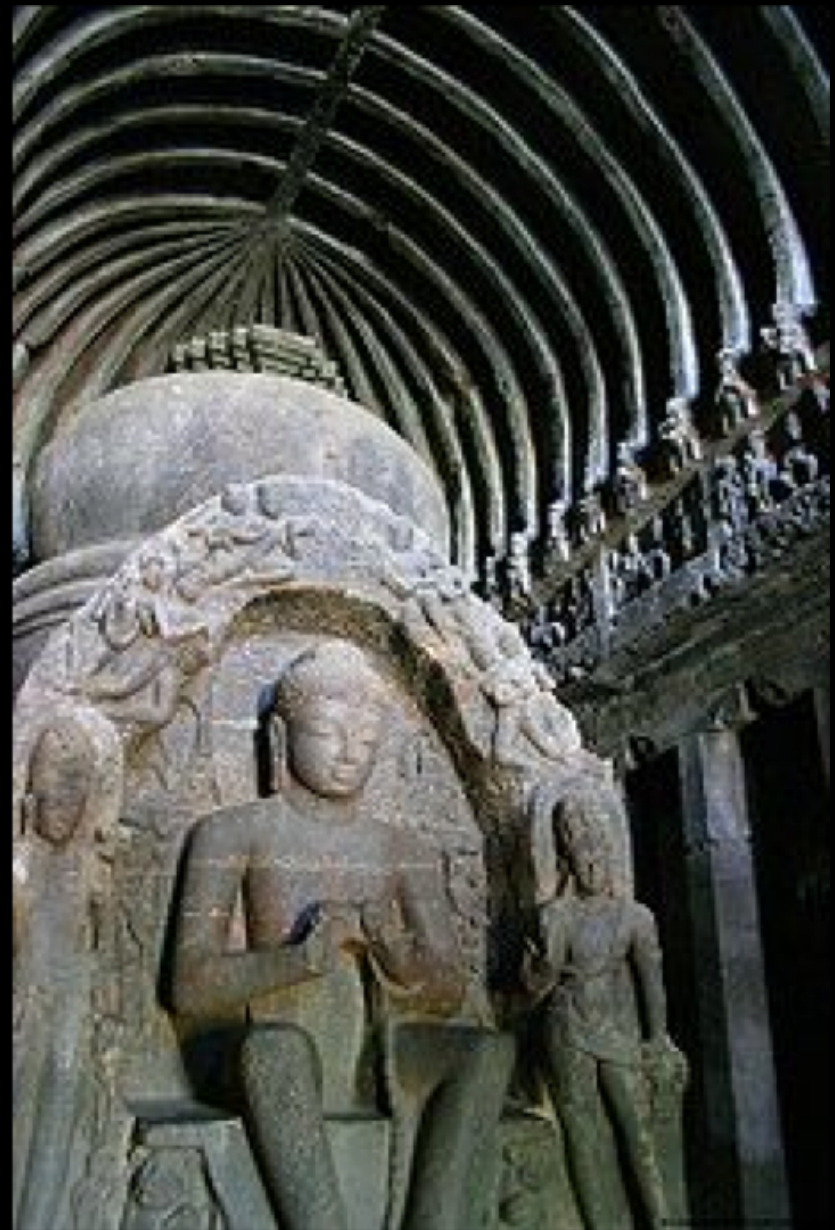


## HINDUISM\_ELLORA

Most famous of the Buddhist caves is cave 10,(refer map) a chaitya hall (chandrashala) or 'Vishvakarma cave', popularly known as the 'Carpenter's Cave' because it looks like it's made of wood.

Beyond its multi-storeyed entry is a cathedral-like stupa hall also known as chaitya, whose ceiling has been carved to give the impression of wooden beams.

At the heart of this cave is a 15-foot statue of Buddha seated in a preaching pose.



Buddha seated in his preaching pose with attendants.



## HINDUISM\_ELLORA

Cave 16, also known as the *Kailasa* or the Kailasanatha, is the unrivaled centerpiece of Ellora.

This is designed to recall Mount Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva. It looks like a freestanding, multi-storied temple complex, but it was carved out of one single rock, and covers an area double the size Parthenon in Athens.

Initially the temple was covered with white plaster making it even more similarity to snow-covered Mount Kailash.



As is traditional in Shiva temples, a large image of the sacred bull Nandi sits in front of the central temple.



Cave 16, the Kailasanatha, Ellora

## HINDUISM\_ELLORA

Within the courtyard are three structures.

The central temple - Nandi Mantapa or Mandapa - houses the Lingam.

The Nandi Mandapa stands on 16 pillars and is 29.3 m high. The base of the Nandi Mandapa has been carved to suggest that life-sized elephants are holding the structure up.



Close up of the temples in the courtyard of Cave 16, the Kailasanatha, Ellora and the lingam of Shiva in the central temple.



## HINDUISM\_ELLORA

There are many sculptural images in the caves. In this one, Lakshmi (or Parvati, the partner of Shiva) is seated in a lotus pond, with Shiva dancing in the skin of the elephant demon, and Ravana is shaking the mountain on which Shiva and Parvati are seated. Again, this is a popular story.



Here is Parvati or Lakshmi seated with attendants. Notice her body style and jewelry. This should remind you of something we studied. Also, you can still see a bit of paint here.



## HINDUISM\_ELLORA

There are also many scenes from the Ramayana as well as other stories are depicted.

In the image below, Shiva is receiving the river goddess Ganga. Remember this story from the second week?



In this image of Ravana shaking Kailasa, the mountain home of Shiva and Parvati, the composition contrasts the domestic peace of the celestial couple above with the crouching figure of the multi-headed and multi-armed demon below.

## HINDUISM\_ Narrative stories

The narrative descriptions usually focus on a single event.

Such as Vishnu stepping out of the cosmic ocean to nuzzle the goddess Bhudevi with his boar head.

This sculpture is sculpted in one of the Udayagiri Caves. It is one of the rock cut caves that date from the Gupta period (350-550 CE). We know from previous lectures that this period was a formative one for both Hindu and Buddhist ideas.

These caves, were cut from the rock in the area as we've seen previously, with Hindu themes.



Vishnu stepping out of the cosmic ocean as Varaha, one of his many avatars, Udayagiri Caves.



## HINDUISM\_Vishnu UDAYAGIRI CAVE

One of the most famous of the sculptures at Udayagiri is the one of Vishnu, as the Boar Avatar, rescuing Earth with masses of worshipers standing on either side and the snake god below. I hope you remember the importance of the snake from earlier lectures.

This image was in the personal temple of a Gupta king, Chandra Gupta II (376-415). His choice of the Varaha Avatar and this story carries symbolic weight as a rescuer.

Many of the Vishnu stories is about the defeat of evil and chaos, reestablishing order and balance in the universe. Chandra Gupta saw himself in this role— as a Vishnu on earth bringing order to the world.



Vishnu stepping out of the cosmic ocean as Varaha, one of his many avatars, Udayagiri Caves.



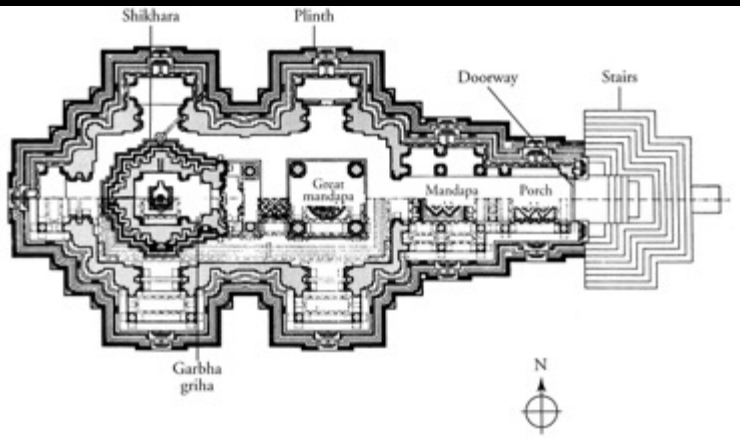
## HINDUISM\_KHAJURAHO

The Vishvanatha temple is part of a temple complex in Khajuraho built 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This complex includes temples dedicated to Vishnu, Shiva and Surya but built by the Chandela king Dhanga with two lingas dedicated to Shiva.



Vishvanatha Temple, Khajuraho, India, ca. 1000.  
(View looking northwest and plan).



The shrine includes an entrance porch, a small hall, a large hall, a vestibule and an inner sanctum with the roof tower. All situated on a base with several sculptures.

## HINDUISM\_LAKSMANA TEMPLE

Another temple in Khajarahho, the Lakshmana temple, is dedicated to Vishnu in his three headed form. Here many females and male/female entwined are presented.

We have already seen that depicting idealized female beauty was important for temple architecture and considered auspicious and protective. Different “types” of women included emphasize their roles as symbols of fertility, growth, and prosperity. Additionally, images of loving couples known as *mithuna* (meaning “the state of being a couple”) appear on the Lakshmana temple as symbols of divine union.



1. Sculpture of a woman removing a thorn from her foot, northwest side exterior wall,
2. Embracing Couple,

Both from the Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, India, dedicated 954 C.E.



## HINDUISM\_LAKSMANA TEMPLE

The temples have several thousand statues and artworks. About 10% contain sexual themes and poses.

Most of the sculpture depicts various aspects of everyday life, mythic stories and values important to Hindu tradition.

Different scholars have different interpretations of the sexually based images:

1. Some say they have to do with tantric sexual practices.
2. Others that this is an essential and proper part of human life.
3. Others that the scenes represent the divine union of male and female.
4. And that they are protectors.



The Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, India, dedicated 954 C.E.



## HINDUISM\_MUSLIM INVASTION

Islam came to India as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Muslim rulers dominated the north from about the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The Mughal Rulers were Muslim but unified the diverse people and beliefs in India in about the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

At the very end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Northern India was overwhelmed by Muslim invasion from Afghanistan and Central Asia.



THIS IS WHERE WE START WHEN RETURNING TO INDIA in a couple of weeks, with the Muslim invasion.



## REVIEW

This week we looked at several different rock cut temples in Hindu architecture.

We emphasized the relationship between temple building and political power.

We discussed again the importance of the sculptures as depicting the stories of Hindu mythology and how sculpture was an essential part of the architecture.

It cannot be stressed enough the conscious connections being made between the Hindu gods who defeated their foe, and the Hindu kings. It may not have been direct but it was implied.

## NEXT WEEK

Next class we look at Buddhism as it blends with already existing beliefs in China like: Confucianism and Chan (or Zen).

We see the development of the Mahayana school with an interest in Pure Land Buddhism and it's interest in the heavenly realm of Amitaba and the bodhisattva,



Avalokitshvara  
known as  
Guanyin.