



# Classical India

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# Chapter 3 Summary

- The Framework for Indian History: Geography and the Formative Period
- Patterns in Classical India
- Political Institutions
- Religion and Culture
- Economy and Society
- In-Depth: Inequality as the Social Norm
- Indian Influence
- China and India
- Global Connections: India and the Wider World

# Important Considerations

- Trace the patterns of early Indian history.
- Assess the influence of Indian culture on the rest of the world.
- Trace the development of the caste system.
- Compare Buddhism and Hinduism
- Identify features of Indian and Chinese geography that help explain each area's social patterns.
- Compare the caste system with the organization of Chinese and Greek society.
- Compare the political implications of Hinduism and Confucianism.
- Compare the family structures of India and China.
- Trace the development of Ashoka's leadership approach.

# Classical India vs. Classical China

- China:
  - Confucianism emphasized politics & social structures that reinforced its mores.
- India:
  - Hinduism emphasized religion & social structures that mirrored its way of life.

# Classical India & Classical China

- Both agricultural, so certain patterns would be similar.
  - Majority of peasant farmers
  - Peasants cluster together into villages for mutual aid and protection.
  - Villages favor localism in outlook and life.
  - Patriarchy: only men own property; women inferior, treated as possessions.
- Also, rivers and coastlines encouraged trade and the formation of major urban centers.
  - Cities allow for specialization and an intelligentsia supported by schools and academies.

# Why Geography Matters

- India was to other civilizations than was China. The implications?
  - Trade easier.
  - Cultural exchange (trade and invasion): Mesopotamia, Mediterranean, Persia, even Hellenism (from Alexander the Great).
  - Influences on art and political concepts.
  - Here's a big one: cultural diffusion.

# Why Geography Matters

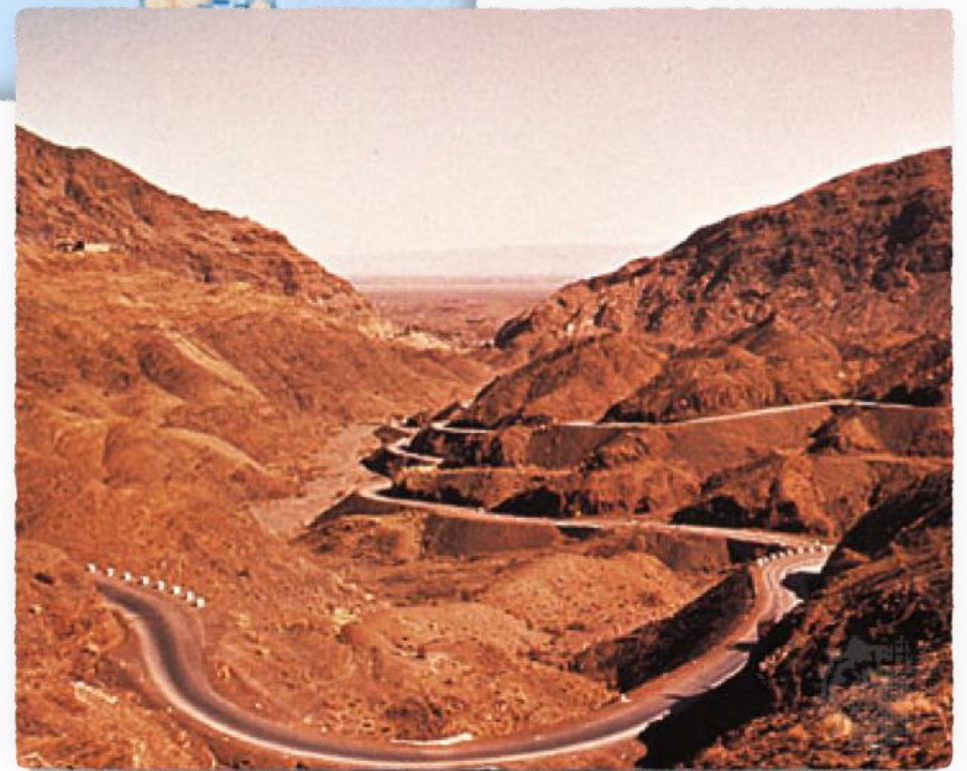
- Separated from East Asia by the Himalayas.
- Shapes China's isolationism





# Why Geography Matters

- Northwest passes (Hindu-Kush, Khyber)
- Open India to invasions (Aryans, Alexander, etc.)
- Mountain passes and extensive coastline help explain why some areas in India are so ethnically, economically, and linguistically diverse.





# Why Geography Matters

- Semitropical climate promotes Monsoons.
  - Good for farming, but...
  - They can be destructive.



# The Formative Period

- After the fall of the Indus RVC
- Also called the "Vedic" and "Epic" ages
- Iron-using Aryans move in and extend agriculture from the Indus to the Ganges.

# Aryan Contributions: Literature

- Literary epics:
  - Mahabharata and Ramayana (both about battles)
  - Upanishads (mystical, religious poems)
- Oral tradition eventually written in Sanskrit.

बालः	बाला	स	सा	तौ	ते
boy	girl	he	she	they (m)	they
ठति	लिख	पच	खाद	चल	हस
reads	write	cook	eat	walk	laugh
वद	शाखा	पत	अम्बा		
speak	branch	fall	mother		
एव	च	न	कुत्र	अत्र	
also	and	no	where ?	here	
गज	अश्व	सिंह	ति	तः	
elephant	horse	lion	does-singular	does-(two)	

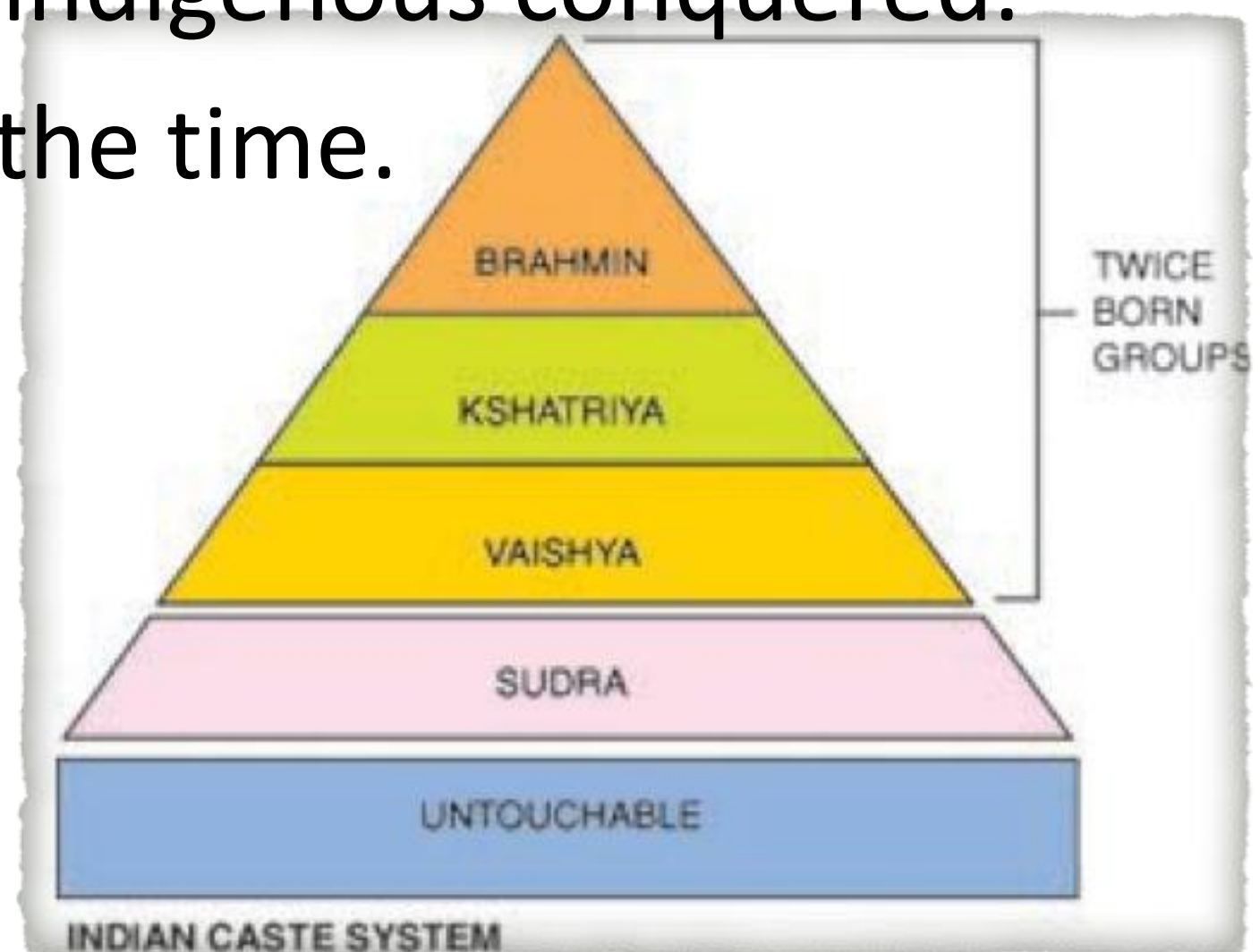


# Aryan Contributions: Politics

- Tightly organized villages led by chiefs.
- Chiefs organize defense and regulate property disputes.
- Strong extended families, patriarchal.

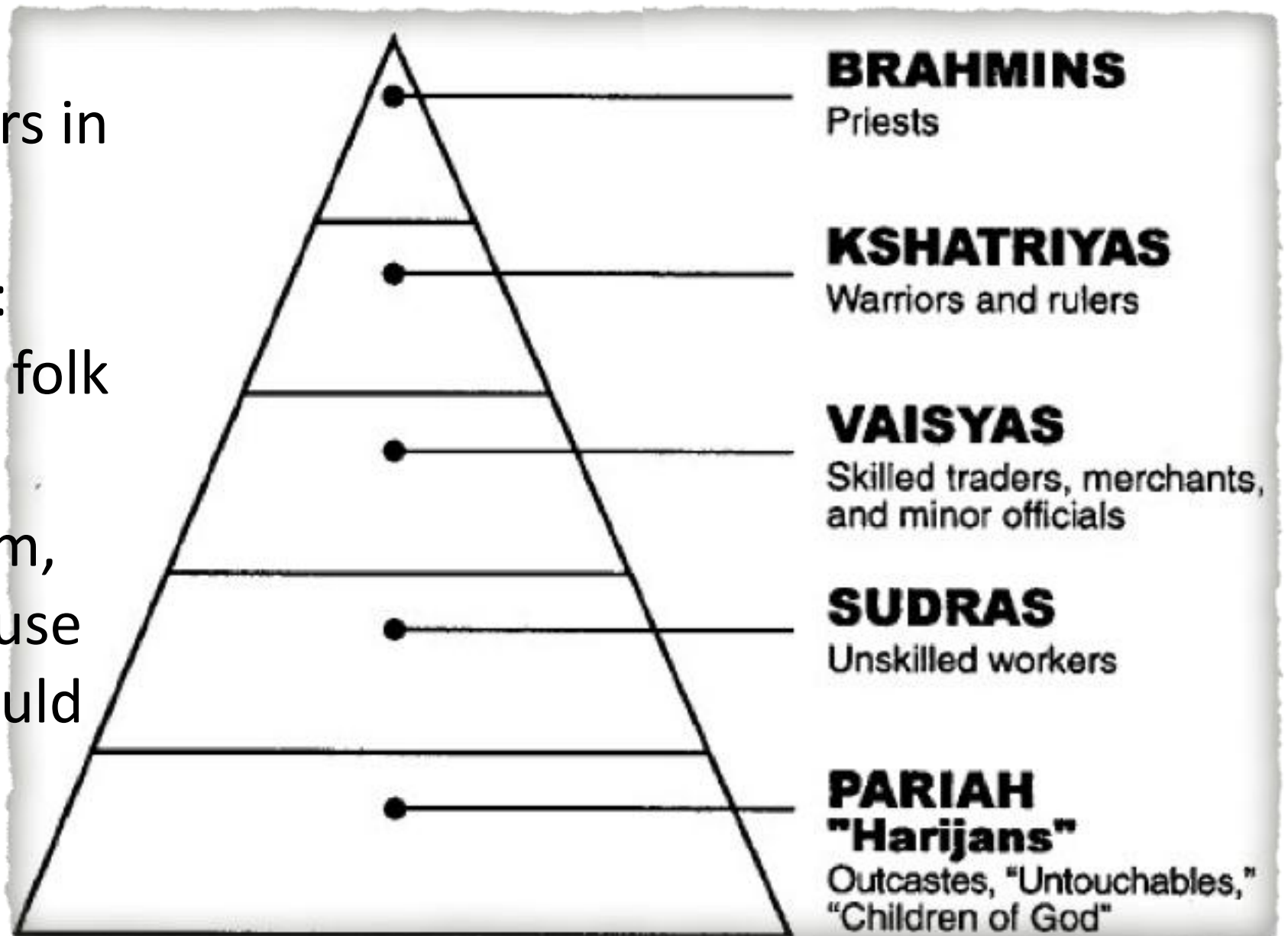
# Aryan Contributions: Caste System

- "Varnas"= social classes.
- To establish relations between Aryan conquerors and the indigenous conquered.
- Enforce divisions of the time.



# Aryan Contributions: Caste System

- Priests, warriors, and Governing officials on top.
- Traders and farmers in the middle.
- Common laborers: landless, unskilled folk
- Those with "Dirty Jobs" at the bottom, untouchable because touching them would defile you.

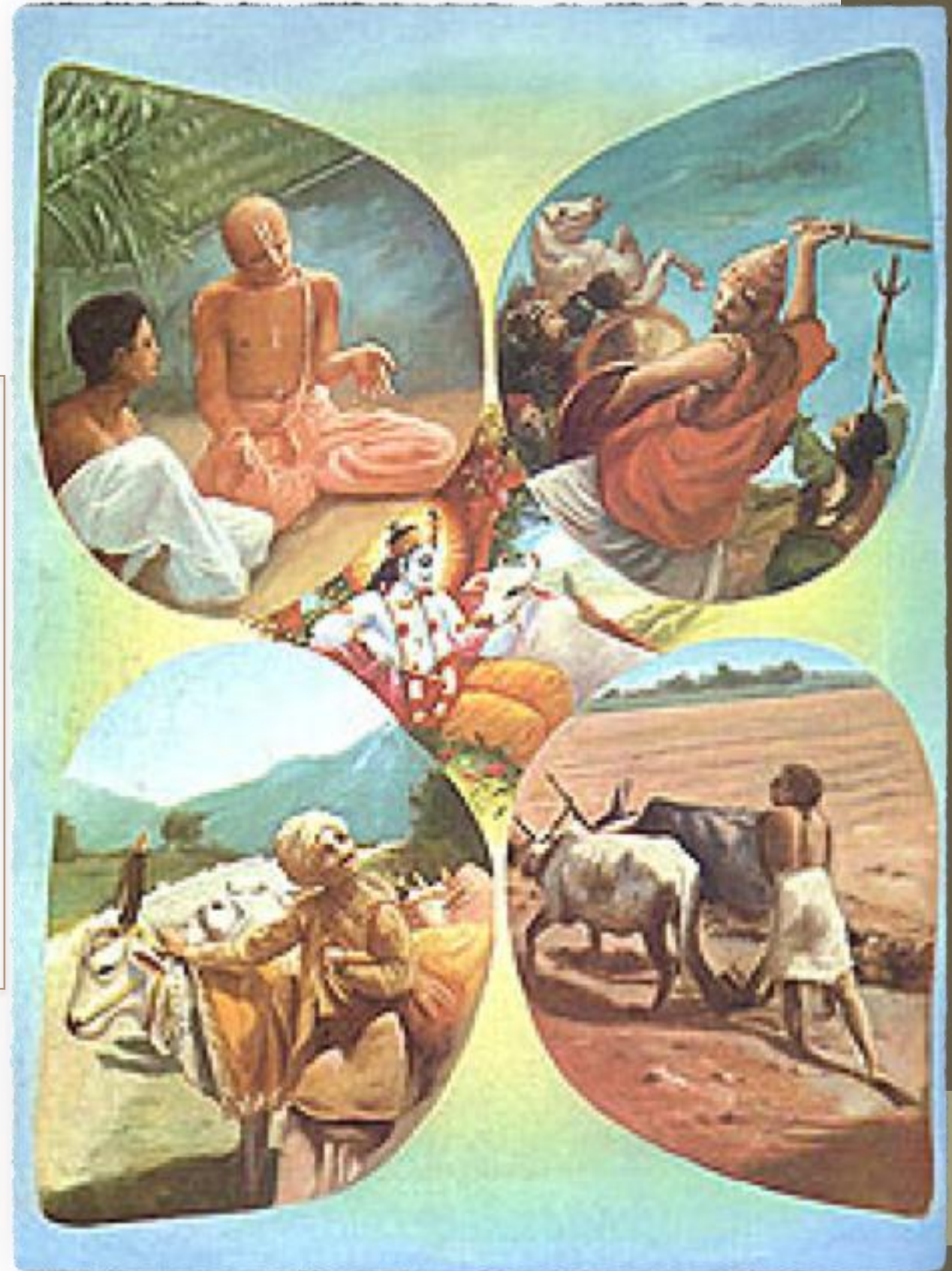




"When a Brahman springs to light, he is born above the world, the chief of all creatures, assigned to guard the treasury of duties, religious and civil."

When they divided the original Man  
into how many parts did they divide him?  
What was his mouth, what were his arms,  
what were his thighs and his feet called?  
The brahman was his mouth, of his  
arms was made the warrior.  
His thighs became the vaisya, of  
His feet the sudra was born.

--From the *Rig-Veda*



# Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple

- You don't build something like this if you are not devoted to your faith.









# Indra, God of Thunder

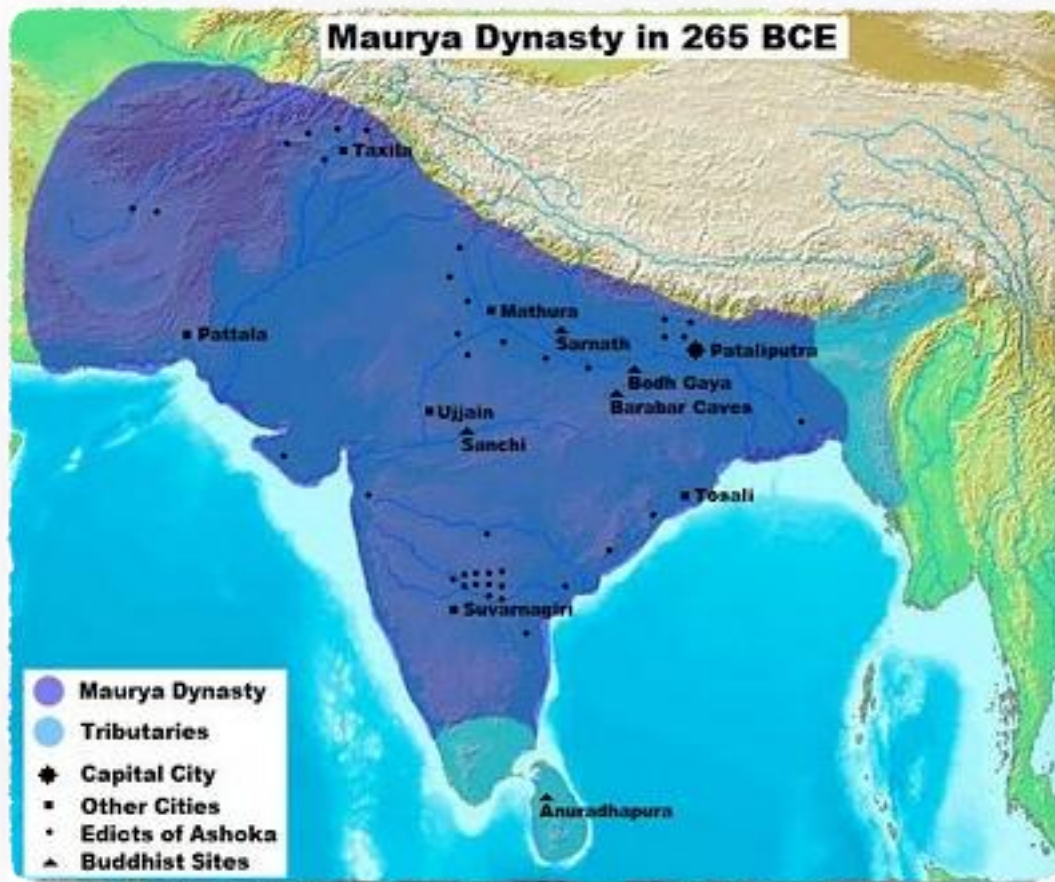


# Patterns in Classical India

- Political/dynastic rhythms not as clear in India as in Greece or China. Invasions and the long term consequences defined much of it more than a single, charismatic ruler.
- Political reaction to Alexander's incursion brought forth Chandragupta Maurya, a soldier who seizes power in the Ganges river area.
- Mauryan dynasty will go far in uniting the Indian subcontinent.



# Mauryan Dynasty



- Like the Persians and Alexander, the Mauryans kept large, standing armies and a large bureaucracy.
- Chandragupta was autocratic, relying on his own prowess and charisma.
- He holds power well enough to pass it onto his son with no real conflict over succession.

# Ashoka, 269-232 B.C.E.

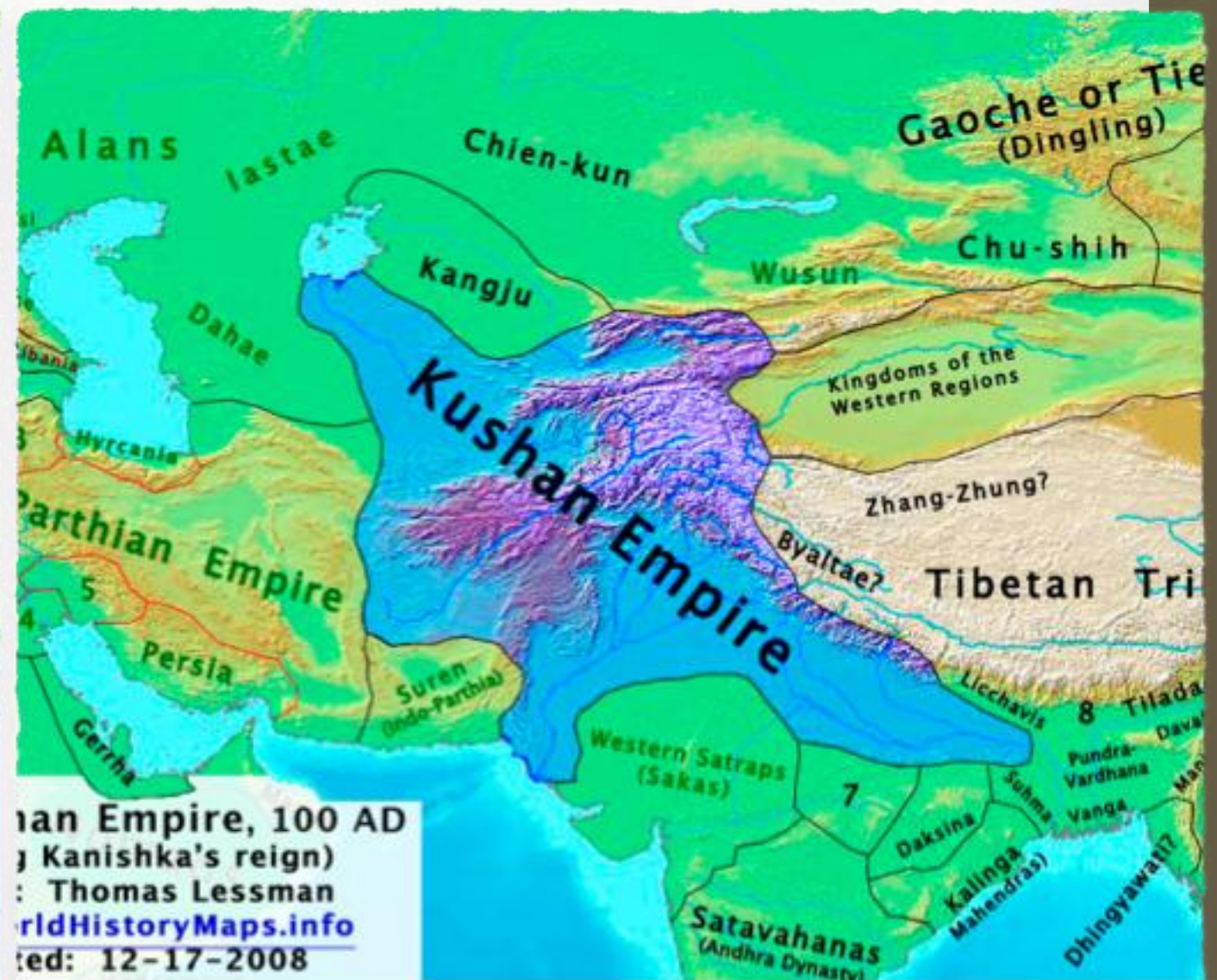
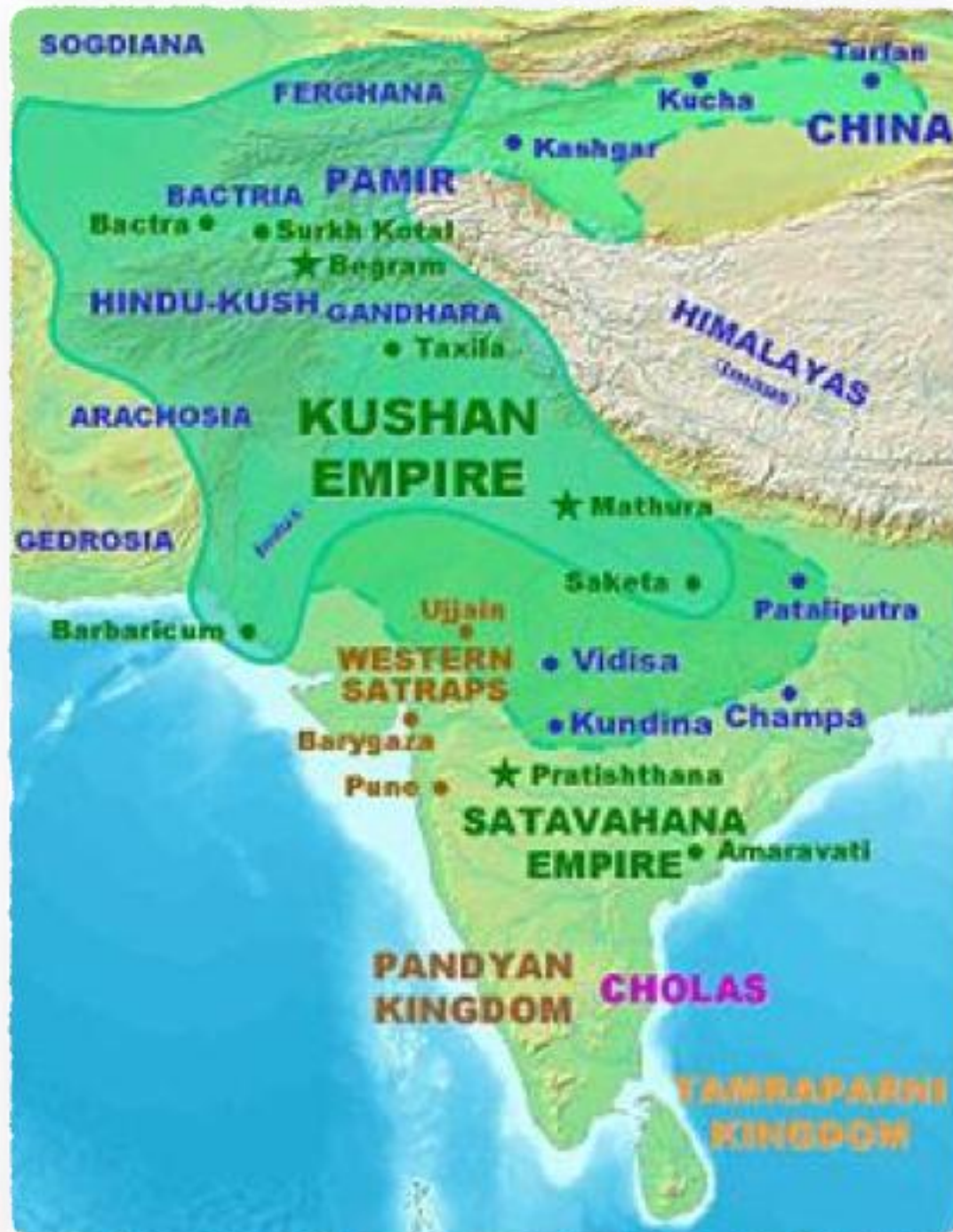
- Chandragupta's grandson
- Governor of two provinces as a young man.
- Enjoyed a life of privilege.
- Trained as a warrior.
- Influenced by Brahmin religion and Buddhism.



- Ashoka ruthlessly expanded the empire, and his conquests were marked by massive loss of life.
- He converts to Buddhism, follows the dharma, and supports Hinduism and Buddhism in the empire.
- He sends Buddhist missionaries out to preach and urges peace and humane behavior.

- Ashoka's empire declines after his death (charismatic leader) as Kushan's push in from the Northwest (invaders...again!)
- Ashoka had promoted Buddhism, but when the Kushan emperor converts to Buddhism it creates a backlash.

# Kushan Empire

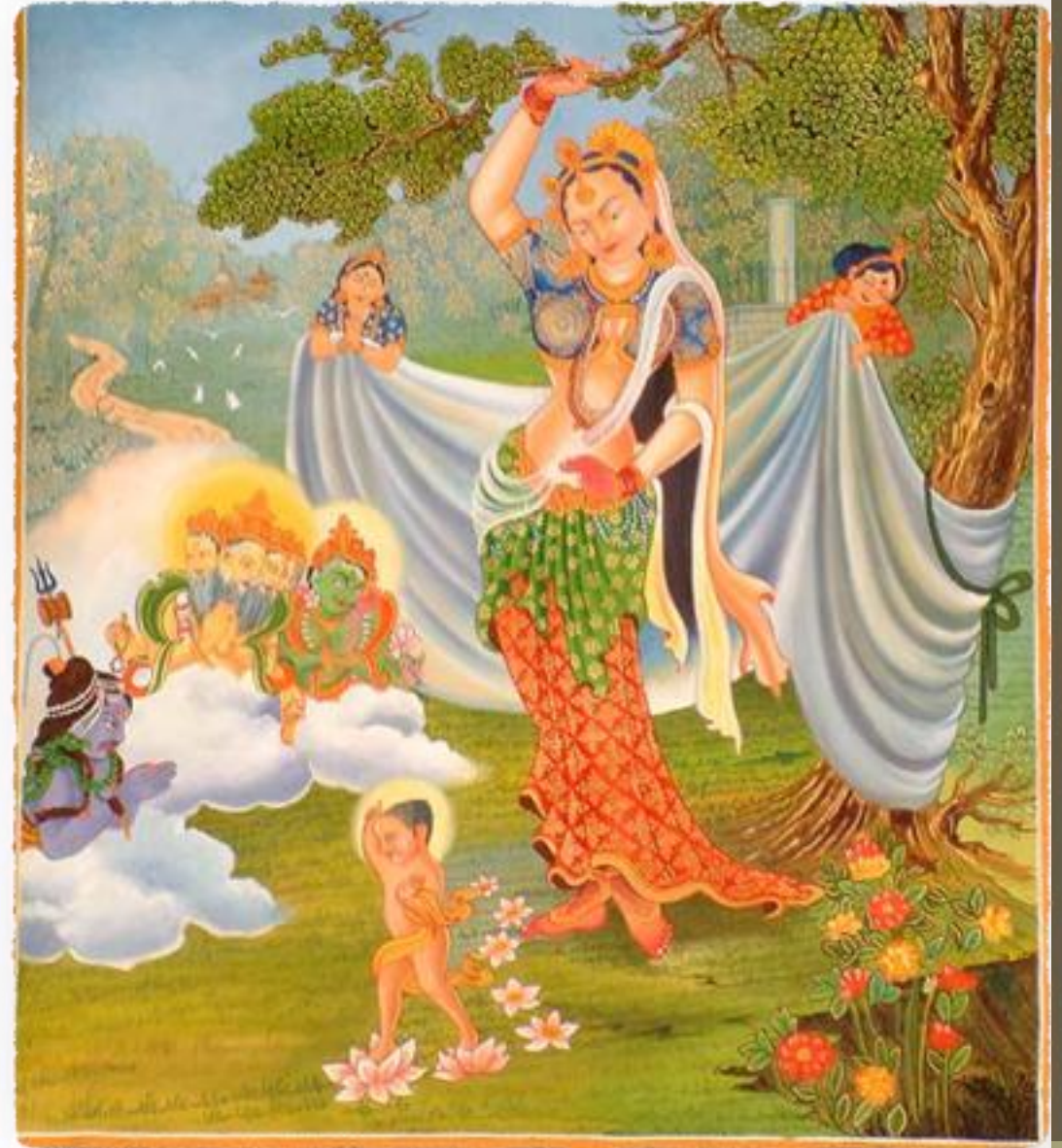




# Two Religions

- Buddha challenged brahmins and ancient Vedic customs.
- No caste emphasis, life devoted to "destruction of self" to achieve nirvana.
- Rivalry between Buddhist and Brahmins would affect gender and social relationships.
- Led to the formation of the Mauryan Empire.
- When the Mauryan Empire collapsed and was replaced by the Gupta, Hinduism emerged to elevate Brahmins once again.

# Buddha





# Buddha





# Untouchables?



# The Gupta

- Replaces the Kushan state.
- Not marked by charismatic rulers worthy of mention, but over two centuries their policies of negotiating with local princes (throwbacks to the Aryans) and intermarriage will expand influence peacefully.
- Peace works!
- Until the Huns invade in 535 C.E...



# Guptas





# Political Institutions

- Never as solid or systematic as the Greeks and Chinese. Perhaps too much disruption for invasions? Perhaps too much localism?
- Regionalism was the key. Diversity prevented a tradition of autocracy. Rulers needed to consult regional assemblies of aristocrats.
- The lack of a strong base in tradition made emperors look for other ways to solidify their rule.
- Mauryans relied on strong armies but feared betrayal and attack.
- The Gupta used Hinduism, claiming to be appointed by the gods (Mandate of Heaven, anyone?), and thus did not support Buddhism.

- Bureaucracies tended to be looser, probably because of regionalism and diversity.
- The Gupta allowed local rulers to manage their areas; they simply had a royal representative present in each ruler's court.
- Indian religion will not stress politics or political leadership. Priests were seen as having the most authority.
- The Gupta make Sanskrit the official, political language, but local languages remain popular.
- The Gupta establish law codes and support infrastructure. They also become patrons of the arts.

- The Caste System becomes more intricate and immutable.
- Divisions of nearly 300 jati (livings)
- Hereditary principles.
- Some mobility--can move down if marrying below one's caste; can move up if you're a particularly successful merchant; but overall pretty rigid.
- Caste system seen as necessary to allow so many diverse people's to live together.



# More on Hinduism

- Developed gradually.
- No single founder or central holy figure.
- Emphases vary: Brahmins more ritualistic and ceremonial; others more mystical, seeking union with the divine principle.
- Unlike Western religions and Daoism, Hinduism did have political and economic goals (Artha) and a place for Earthly pleasures (Karma). Therefore, it was more "fluid."
- Reincarnation (logic behind), yoga (union of the freed mind with the divine spirit),

- Castes help regulate economic activity.
- Theme of hierarchy is strong, all the way down to families' patriarchalism.

# Hinduism: Gurus

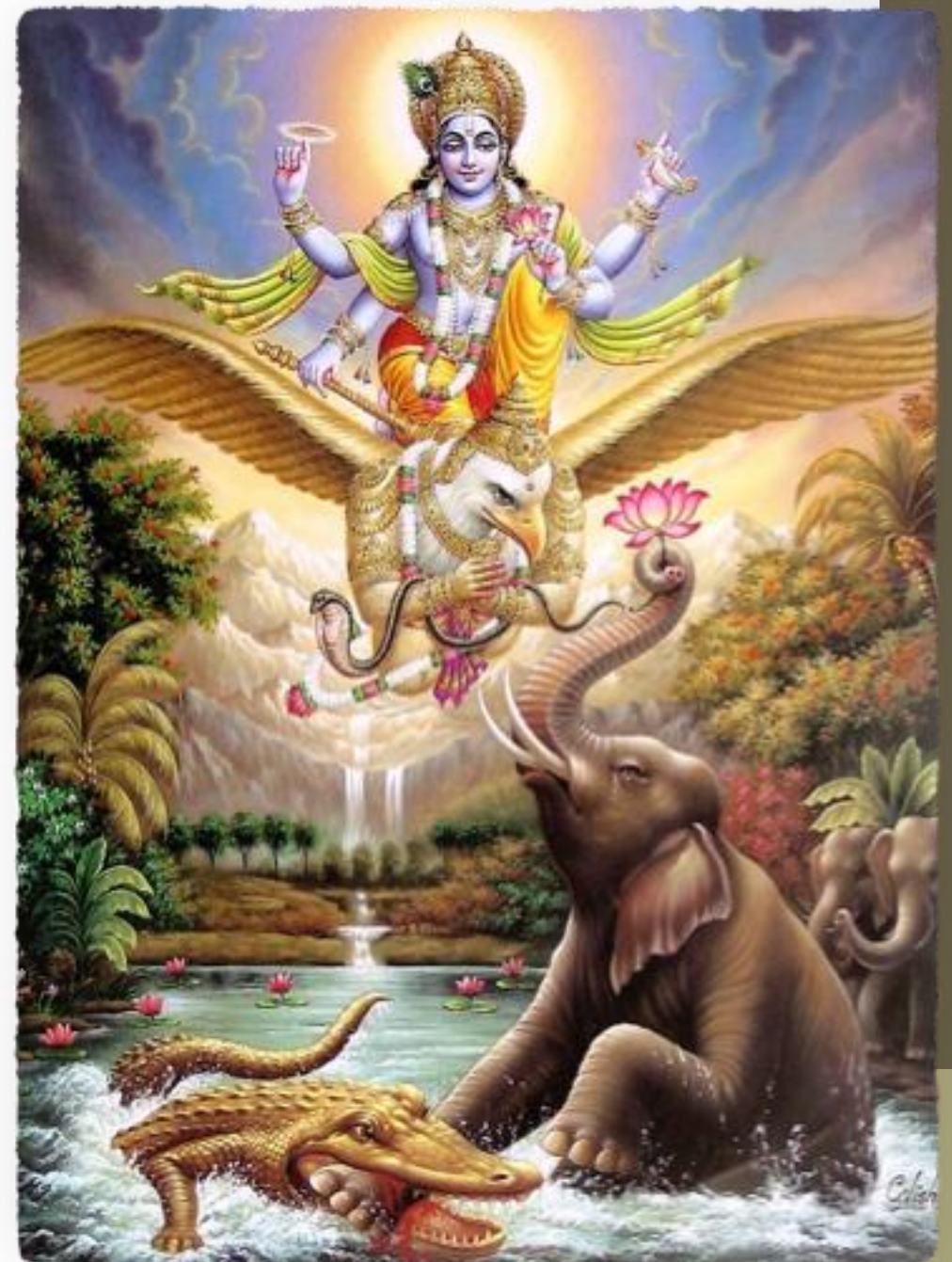




# Hinduism: Vishnu, the Preserver



Which is older, and why?





# Hinduism: Shiva, the Destroyer

