



CLASS: VI
SUBJECT: SOCIAL SCIENCE
CHAPTER: 7 INDIA'S CULTURAL ROOTS
BOOK: EXPLORING SOCIETY: INDIA AND BEYOND

The Big Questions?



What are the Vedas? What is their message?



What new schools of thought emerged in India in the 1st millennium BCE? What are their core principles?



What is the contribution of folk and tribal traditions to Indian culture?

Indian culture

Indian culture is ancient, with roots stretching back thousands of years.

It is like a tree with many roots and branches, each representing different aspects of Indian civilization such as **art, literature, science, medicine, religion, governance, and martial arts.**

These branches are distinct, yet all connected to a common cultural trunk. Some of these roots trace back to the **Indus Valley** (Harappan) civilization, while later, many **schools of thought** emerged, contributing to the unique identity of India.

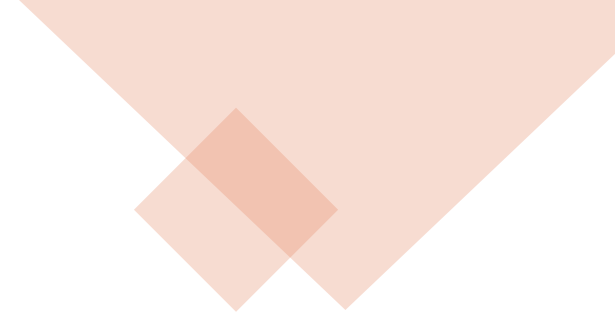
By exploring these early schools of thought, we gain deeper insight into the cultural and intellectual foundations of India, helping us understand the essence of "India, that is Bharat."

The Vedas and Vedic Culture

- **Meaning of "Veda":** The word "**Veda**" comes from the Sanskrit root "**vid**", meaning 'knowledge'.
- **Connection to Other Words:** The same root appears in words like **vidyā**, which means knowledge.
- **Ancient Texts:** The Vedas are the most ancient sacred texts of **India** and are among the **oldest** in the world.



**There are
four Vedas.**



Ṛig Veda

Yajur Veda

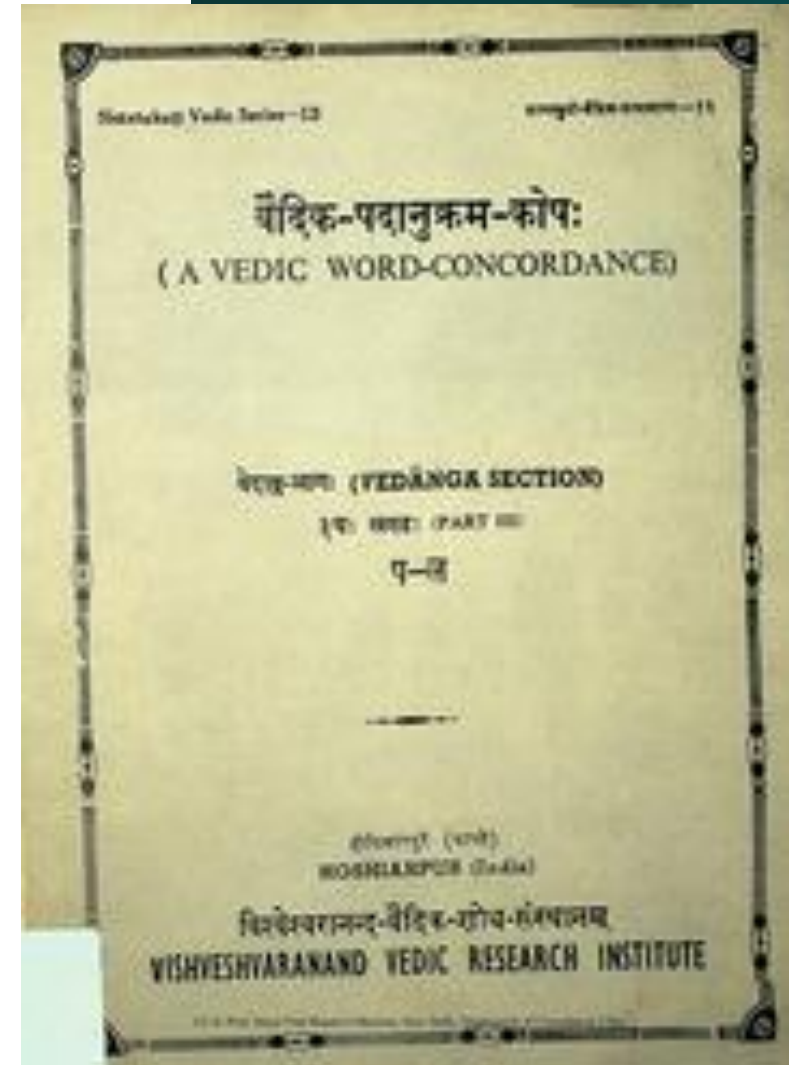
Sāma Veda

Atharva Veda



About Vedas

- **Vedic Hymns:** The **Vedas** consist of thousands of **hymns**, which are **prayers** in the form of **poems** and **songs**.
- **Oral Tradition:** These hymns were originally **recited orally**, not written down.
- **Place of Composition:** The hymns were composed in the **Sapta Sindhava** region (covered in Chapter 5).
- **Date of Composition:** The exact time of the **R̥ig Veda's** composition is unclear, with experts proposing dates from the **5th to the 2nd millennium BCE**.
- **Oral Transmission:** For over **100 to 200 generations**, the Vedas were **committed to memory** and passed down orally through **rigorous training** without significant alterations.



Vedic Hymns

- **Composers of Vedic Hymns:** The **Vedic hymns** were composed by **rishis** (male sages) and **rishikas** (female sages).
- **Language:** The hymns were written in an early form of the **Sanskrit** language.
- **Addressed to Deities:** The hymns were addressed to various **deities**, such as:
 - **Indra** (god of thunder and war)
 - **Agni** (fire god)
 - **Varuṇa** (god of the cosmic order)
 - **Mitra** (god of friendship)
 - **Sarasvatī** (goddess of wisdom and arts)
 - **Uṣhas** (goddess of dawn)
- **Role of Deities and Seers:** The **rishis** and **deities** together sustained **ṛitam** – the concept of **truth** and **order** in both human life and the cosmos.

Vedic Thoughts



Unity of Gods and Goddesses: The early **rishis** and **rishikas** saw the gods and goddesses as **one**, not as separate beings.



Truth as God: In this worldview, **Truth** was considered central and was often equated with **God**.



Values in Vedic Thought: The **Rig Veda** emphasizes the importance of **Truth** and calls for **unity among people**.



Call for Unity: The last **mantras (verses)** of the **Rig Veda** specifically encourage **unity** and harmony among people.

Vedic society

Organization of Early Vedic Society: Early Vedic society was organized into different **janas** (or **clans**), which were large groups of people.

Mentioned in Ṛig Veda: The **Ṛig Veda** lists over **30 janas**, including names like:

Bharatas

Purus

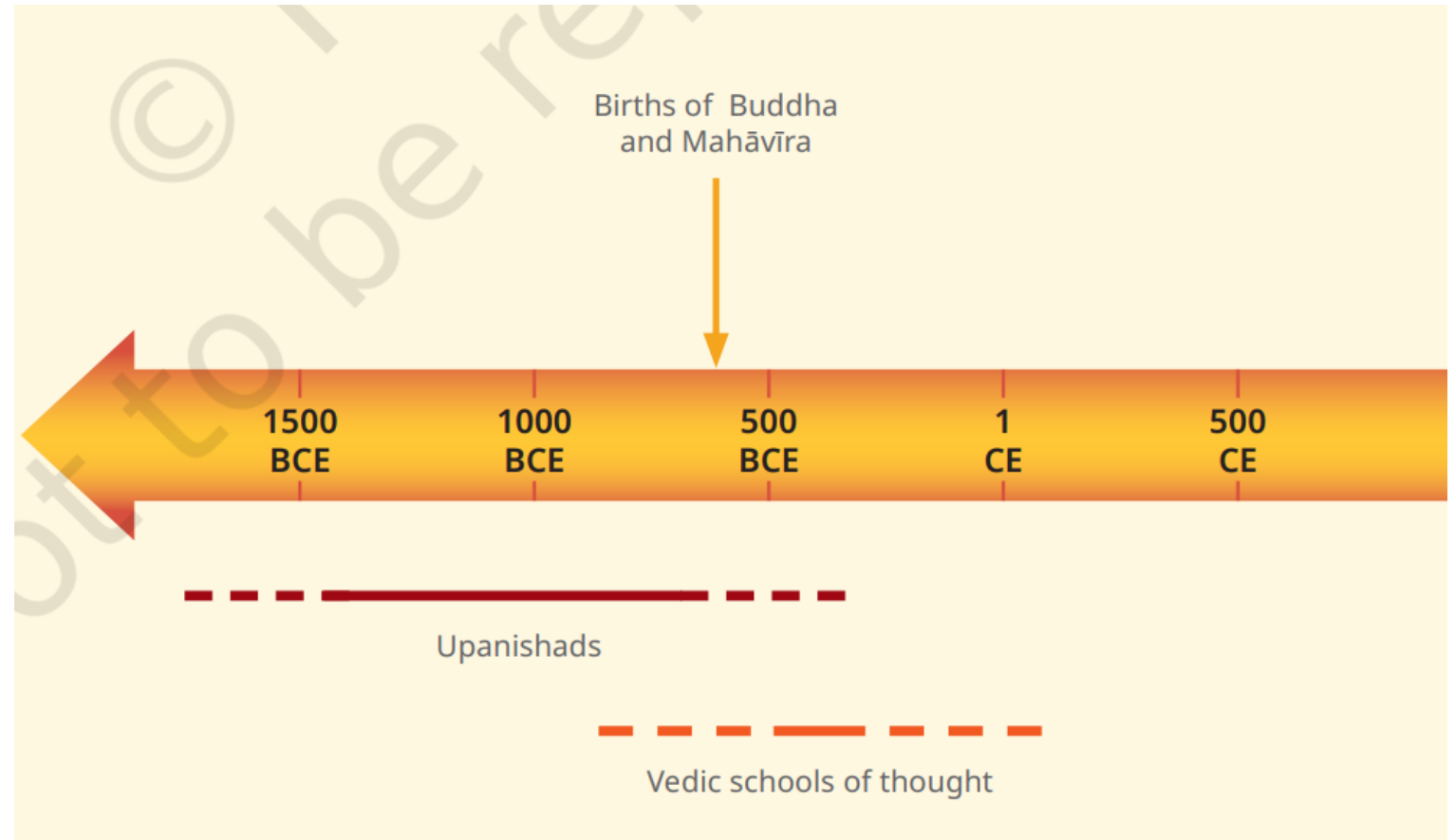
Kurus

Yadus

Turvaśhas

Geographical Association: Each clan was linked to a particular **region** in the **northwest** part of the Indian Subcontinent.

Time line



Governance in Vedic Society



Governance in Vedic Society: Not much is known about how the **janas** (clans) governed themselves. The **Vedas** provide only a few clues.



Clues from Vedic Texts:



Rājā: Refers to a **king** or **ruler**.



Sabhā and **Samiti:** These terms refer to collective gatherings or assemblies where decisions might have been made.

Professions in Vedic Society

Agriculturist

Weaver

Potter

Builder

Carpenter

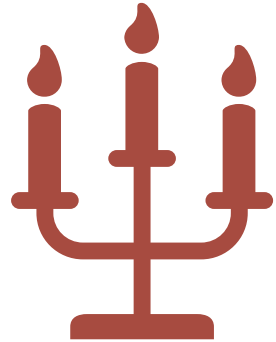
Healer

Dancer

Barber

Priest

Vedic schools of thought



Vedic Rituals: Vedic culture developed many **rituals** (called **yajña** or **yagya**) directed towards various deities for personal and collective wellbeing.



Daily Rituals: These rituals were usually prayers and offerings, particularly to **Agni**, the **fire deity**. Over time, these rituals became more complex.

Upaniṣhads

Upaniṣhads: A group of texts called the **Upaniṣhads** built upon Vedic concepts and introduced new ideas, such as:

Rebirth: The concept of being born again and again.

Karma: The idea that our actions have consequences.

Vedanta School of Thought: According to the **Vedanta** school, everything in life, nature, and the universe is part of a **divine essence** called **Brahman** (not to be confused with the god Brahmā).

Expression of Vedanta: Two famous **mantras** express this profound unity, simply stating that everything is connected to **Brahman** or **Tat** ('that').

Upaniṣhads

aham brahmāsmi

“I am brahman” (that is to say, I am divine)

tat tvam asi...

“You are That”

Upaniṣhads



Concept of Ātman: The Upaniṣhads introduced the concept of **ātman**, which is the **Self** or divine essence that resides in every being. It is ultimately one with **Brahman**.



Interconnectedness: This belief emphasizes that everything in the world is **connected** and **interdependent**.



Common Prayer: A well-known prayer expresses this idea, beginning with "**sarve bhavantu sukhinah**", meaning "May all creatures be happy," and continuing with wishes for freedom from **disease** and **sorrow**.

New Schools of Thought



New Schools of Thought: Early in the **1st millennium BCE**, several new schools of thought developed from the Vedas.



Yoga: One important school was **Yoga**, which developed practices and methods aimed at achieving the realization of **Brahman** (the ultimate reality) in one's own consciousness.



Foundation of Hinduism: Together, these schools of thought laid the foundation for what we now refer to as **Hinduism**.

Buddhism

01

Emergence of New Schools:

In addition to the Vedic traditions, other schools of thought emerged that did not accept the authority of the Vedas.

02

Buddhism: One such school was **Buddhism**, which developed its own system of beliefs and practices.

03

Siddhārtha Gautama: Around **2,500 years ago**, a prince named **Siddhārtha Gautama** was born in **Lumbini** (modern-day Nepal).

04

Approximate Birth Year:

While scholars debate the exact year of Siddhārtha's birth, an approximate year of **560 BCE** is commonly accepted. This does not affect the broader historical context of his life and teachings.

**This stone panel,
some 1,800 years
old, shows the
Buddha teaching**



Siddhārtha Gautama

Siddhārtha's Protected Life: Siddhārtha Gautama grew up in a palace, living a protected life away from the hardships of the outside world.



The Chariot Ride: At age **29**, Siddhārtha asked to be driven through the city and saw an **old man**, a **sick man**, a **dead body**, and an **ascetic** who seemed at peace and happy.



Decision to Leave: After this experience, Siddhārtha decided to leave his palace life, including his wife and son, to search for the cause of human suffering.

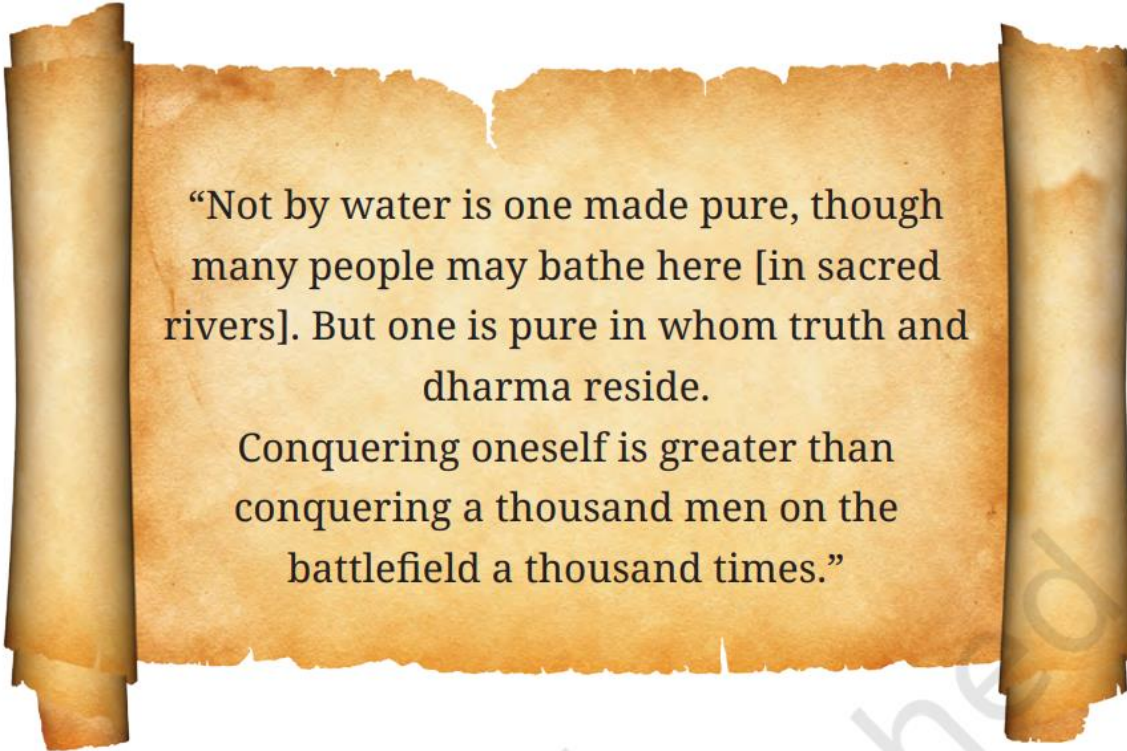


Ascetic Life: Siddhārtha traveled as an ascetic, meeting others who followed ascetic practices, and meditated under a **pipal tree at Bodh Gaya** (modern-day Bihar), seeking answers.



Buddha's Teachings

- **Enlightenment:** After meditating for days, Siddhārtha attained **enlightenment**, realizing that **ignorance (avidyā)** and **attachment** are the sources of human suffering.
- **Becoming the Buddha:** He became known as the **Buddha**, meaning the "**enlightened**" or "**awakened**" one.
- **Buddha's Teachings:** The Buddha began teaching his insights, including the principle of **ahimsa** (non-violence or non-hurting), and emphasized the importance of **inner discipline**.
- **Buddha's Saying:** He expressed his teachings simply, emphasizing inner peace and personal discipline as the path to overcoming suffering.

A scroll with a quote about purity and truth.

“Not by water is one made pure, though many people may bathe here [in sacred rivers]. But one is pure in whom truth and dharma reside.

Conquering oneself is greater than conquering a thousand men on the battlefield a thousand times.”

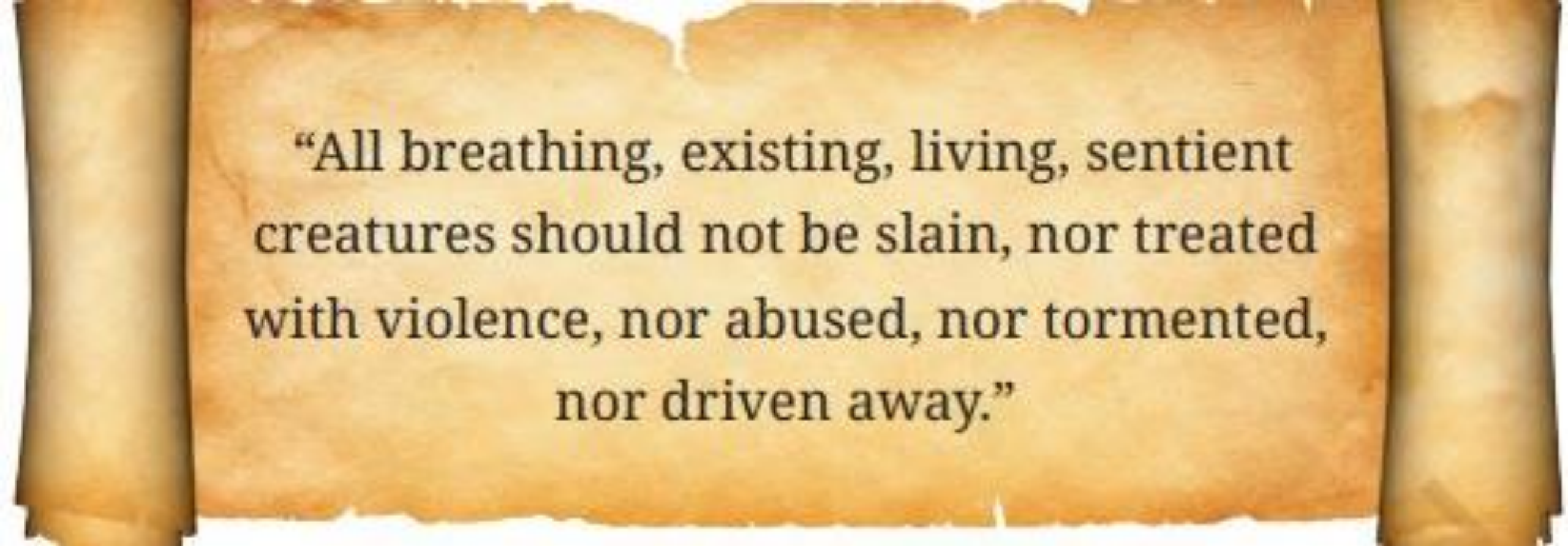
The Sangha

- **The Sangha:** The Buddha established the **Sangha**, a community of **bhikṣhus** (monks) and later **bhikṣhunīs** (nuns), who dedicated their lives to practicing and spreading his teachings.
- **Buddha's Influence:** The Buddha's teachings had a profound impact on **India** and **Asia** as a whole.
- **Lasting Impact:** His influence continues to be felt today, with Buddhism still being a major religious and philosophical force around the world.

Jainism

- **Jainism's Origins:** Jainism, an ancient school of thought, became widespread around the same time as Buddhism. Its roots, however, are believed to be even older than the time of its formal spread.
- **Mahāvīra's Early Life:** Prince Vardhamāna, later known as **Mahāvīra**, was born in the early 6th century BCE near Vaiśhālī (modern-day Bihar). He came from a royal family.
- **Mahāvīra's Spiritual Journey:** At the age of 30, Mahāvīra renounced his royal life in search of spiritual wisdom. After 12 years of intense ascetic practice, he achieved '**infinite knowledge**' or supreme wisdom.
- **Mahāvīra's Teachings:** After attaining enlightenment, Mahāvīra began preaching his teachings, which emphasized the path to liberation through non-violence, truth, and asceticism. He became known as '**Mahāvīra**', meaning the '**great hero**'.



A scroll with a quote about Jainism. The scroll is unrolled, showing a piece of aged, yellowish paper with a slightly torn edge. The text is written in a black, serif font, centered on the paper. The scroll is held by two vertical wooden rods on either side.

“All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.”

Key Teachings of Jainism

Ahimsa (Non-Violence): One of the core principles of Jainism is **ahimsa**, or non-violence.

This concept is shared with both Buddhism and Vedantic philosophy.

It emphasizes compassion and respect for all forms of life, advocating harm-free living.



Anekāntavāda (Non-Absolutism) and Aparigraha (Non-Possession)



Anekāntavāda (Non-Absolutism): This teaching, known as **anekāntavāda**, suggests that truth has many aspects. It asserts that no single perspective can fully capture the complexity of reality. Truth is multi-faceted, and one must understand and respect different viewpoints.



Aparigraha (Non-Possession): **Aparigraha** means non-possession or non-attachment to material wealth. It encourages detachment from material goods and advocates living with only what is essential, promoting simplicity and contentment in life.



Interconnectedness of Life: Jainism teaches that all living beings, from humans to microscopic organisms, are interconnected and interdependent. This idea has been supported by modern science, which has confirmed the importance of each creature in maintaining the balance of nature.



These principles, rooted in Jain thought, have significantly influenced Indian culture and continue to resonate in the philosophy of non-violence, environmental conservation, and ethical living.

Monks and Nuns

- **Monks and Nuns:** Both Buddhist and Jain monks and nuns traveled widely across India to spread their teachings.
- **Monasteries and Caves:** They established monasteries and lived in rock-cut caves, where they practiced asceticism and meditation.
- **Archaeological Evidence:** Many rock-cut caves and inscriptions have been discovered, shedding light on the monks' lives and teachings.
- **Ascetic Practices:** These ascetics led simple, disciplined lives, often sleeping on stone beds and living with minimal possessions.



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