



religions of ancient india

The Seated Buddha statue from Gandhara, Pakistan, dates to the 100s-200s AD.

1. Hinduism

Main texts:

- A. **Vedas** (composed in 1000s BC): a collection of poems about the creation of the world, gods and goddesses, and priestly rituals. The Vedas featured Indra, a warrior god of thunderbolts.
- B. **Vedantas** (the *end of the Vedas*; from c. 500 BC): philosophical discussions of life and union with the godhead
 - 1) *Bhagavad Gita* (classic Hinduism): a conversation between the famed warrior Arjuna and the god Krishna. This text contains a variety of religious beliefs, including monotheism
 - 2) Development of commonly-known Hindu beliefs in the Vedanta period:
 - karma: energy created by your deeds, for good or evil
 - samsara (reincarnation)
 - four castes (varnas): brahmans, kshatriyas, vaisyas, and shudras
 - other gods come to the fore: Shiva, Krishna, Brahma

2. Buddhism

A. Four Noble Truths

- 1) Noble Truth of Suffering (life is pain)
- 2) Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (craving and desires)
- 3) Noble truth of the extinction of suffering (nirvana)
- 4) Noble truth that leads to the extinction of suffering (the Eightfold Path):
 - right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

B. Main Schools

- 1) Theravada Buddhism is usually considered to be the earliest form of Buddhism, which emphasizes simplicity of the Four Noble Truths
- 2) Mahayana Buddhism is a school that has a stronger emphasis on *bodhisattvas*; its texts are generally held to have been composed later than the Mahayana texts