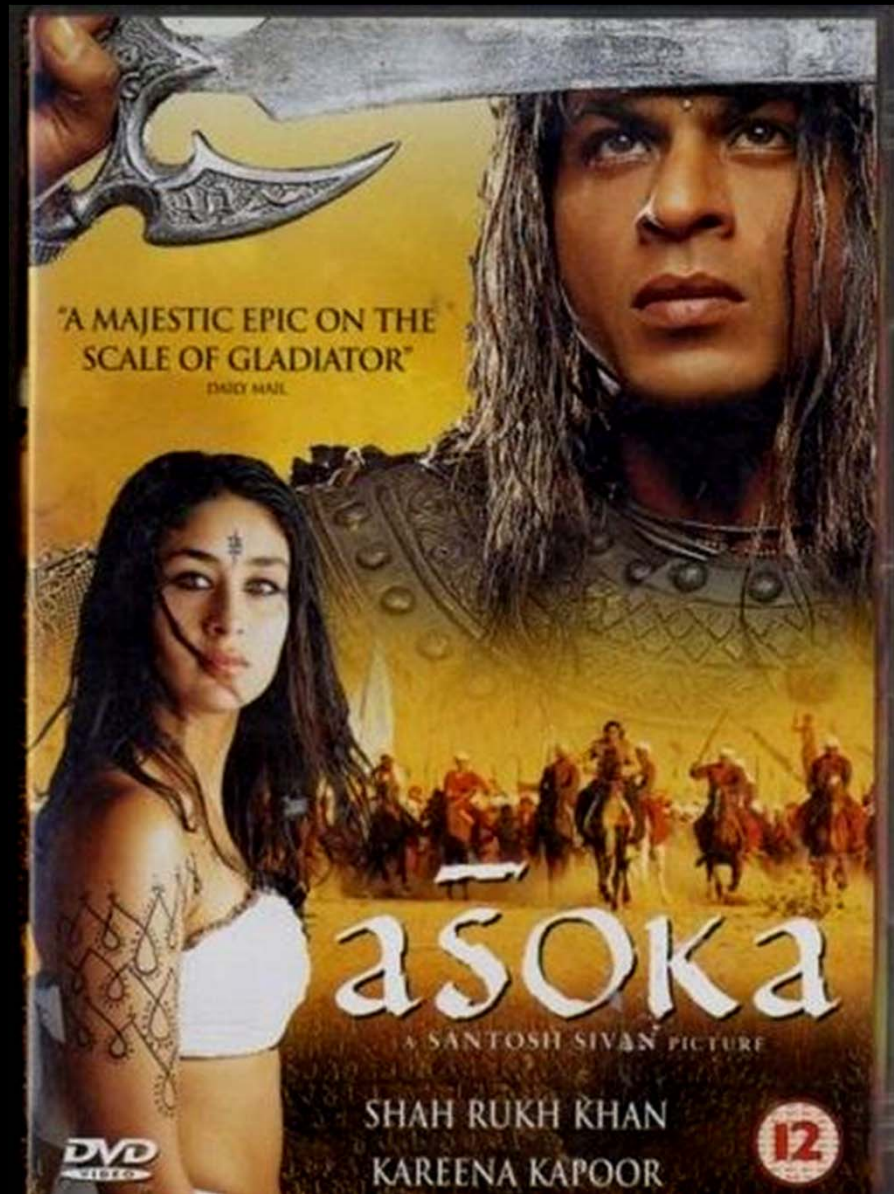


Politics in Theravada Buddhism



poster by the "Bay Area Radical Sangha"
For Occupy Los Angeles (Oct. 2011)



Aśoka The Great (304-232 BCE)



A Chakravatin, 1st century BCE/CE (Andhra Pradesh, Amaravati. Musee Guimet)

In iconography, a Chakravatin has
Chakra, queen , chariot , jewel, wealth , horse, elephant, prime minister, and son

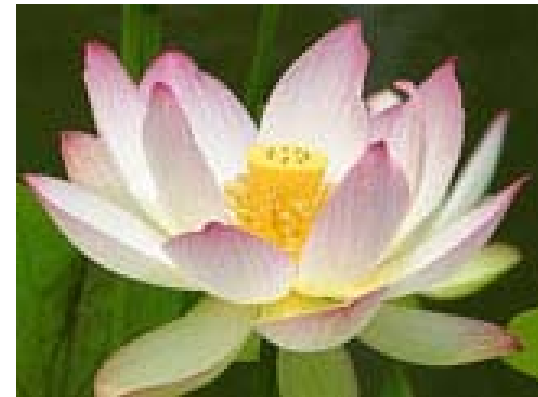




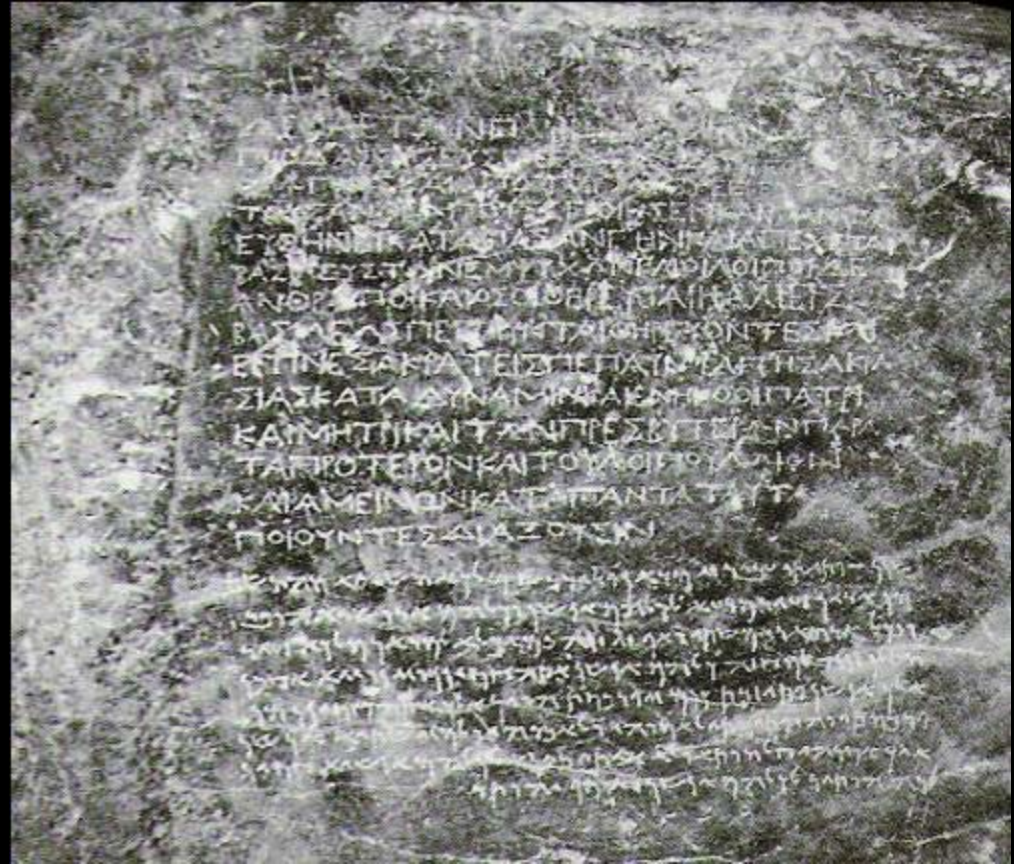
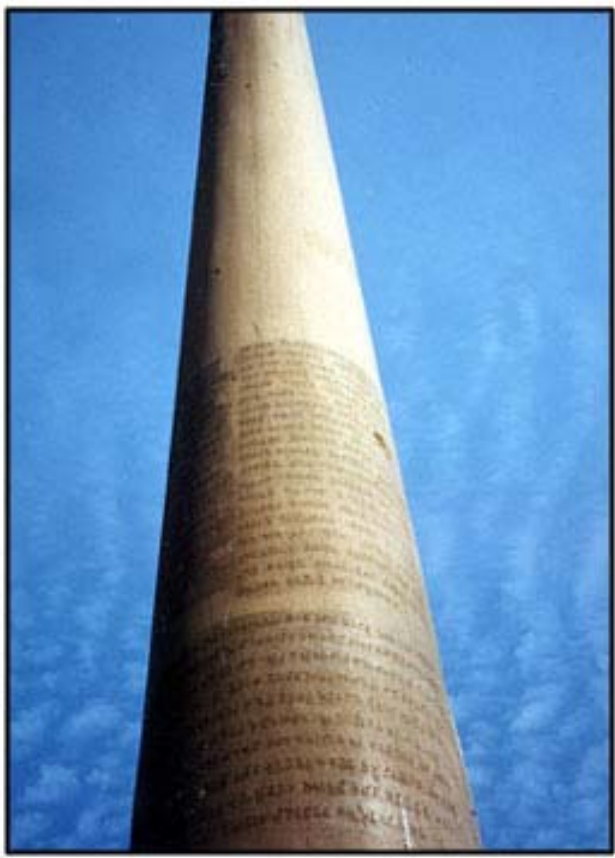
National flag of India



National emblem of India



National flower of India



Aśoka's pillars put into law basic Buddhist precepts:

Refrain from destroying living beings

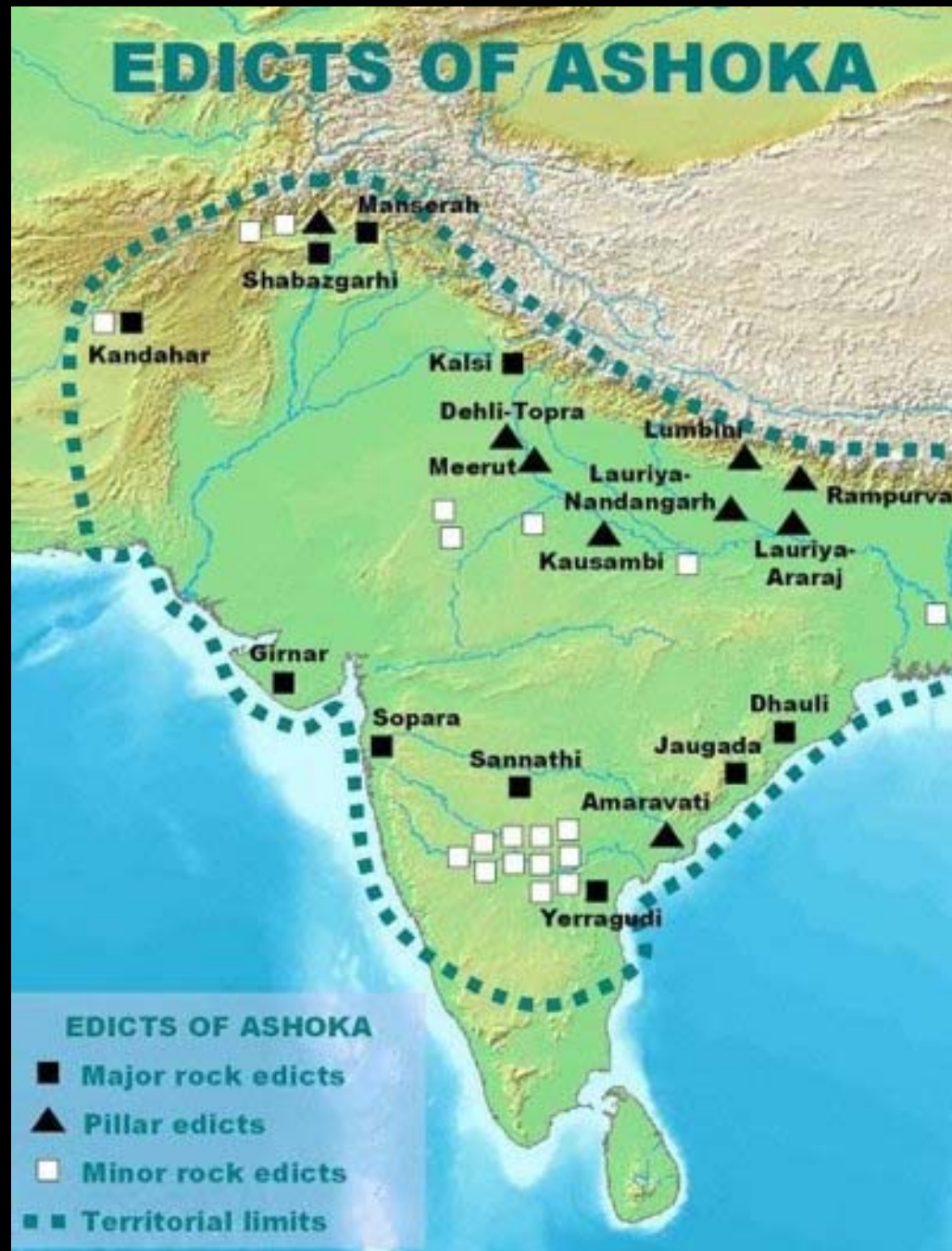
Refrain from stealing

Refrain from sexual misconduct

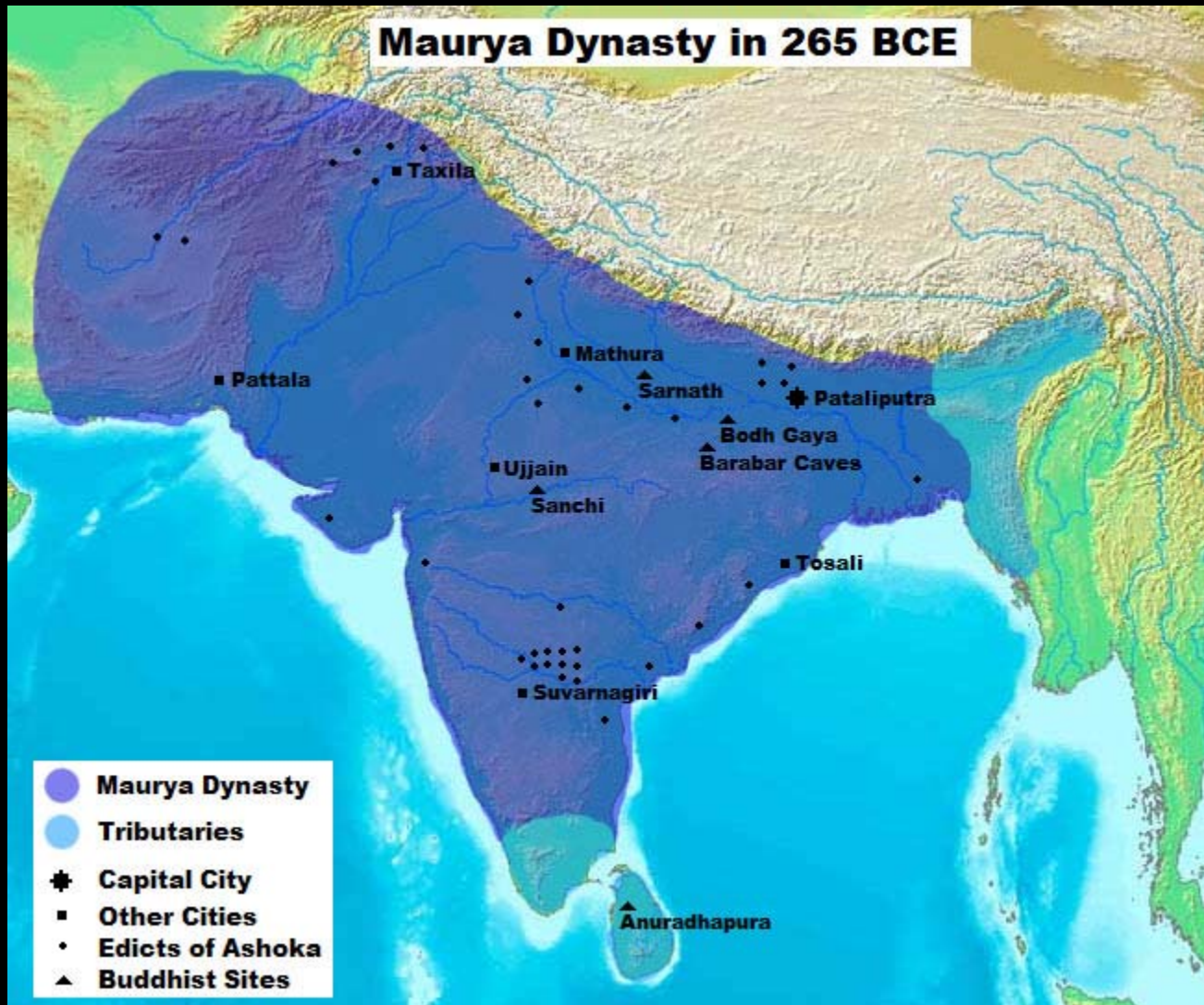
Refrain from lying

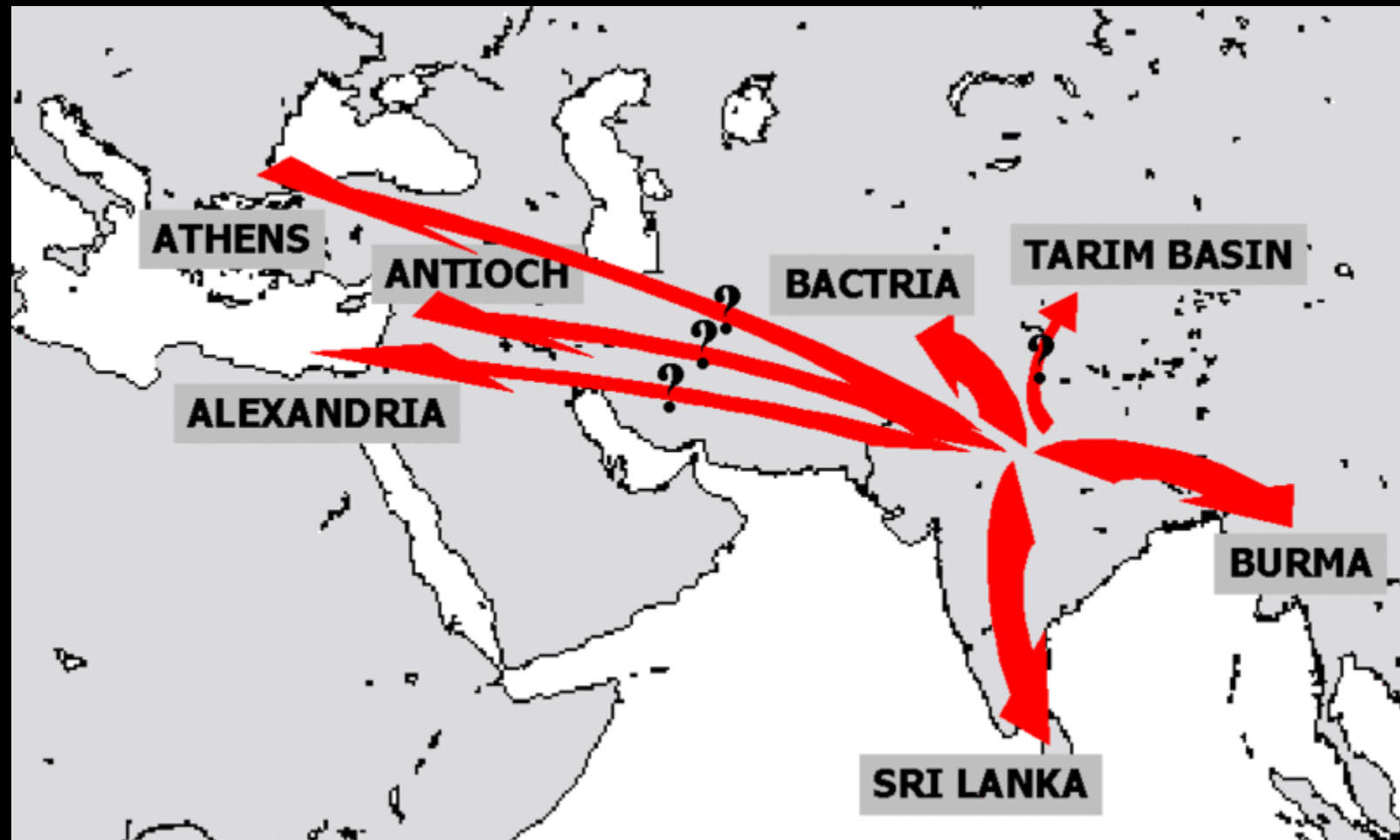
Refrain from intoxicants which lead to heedlessness

EDICTS OF ASHOKA



Maurya Dynasty in 265 BCE





Buddhist proselytism at the time of king Aśoka according to his Edicts.

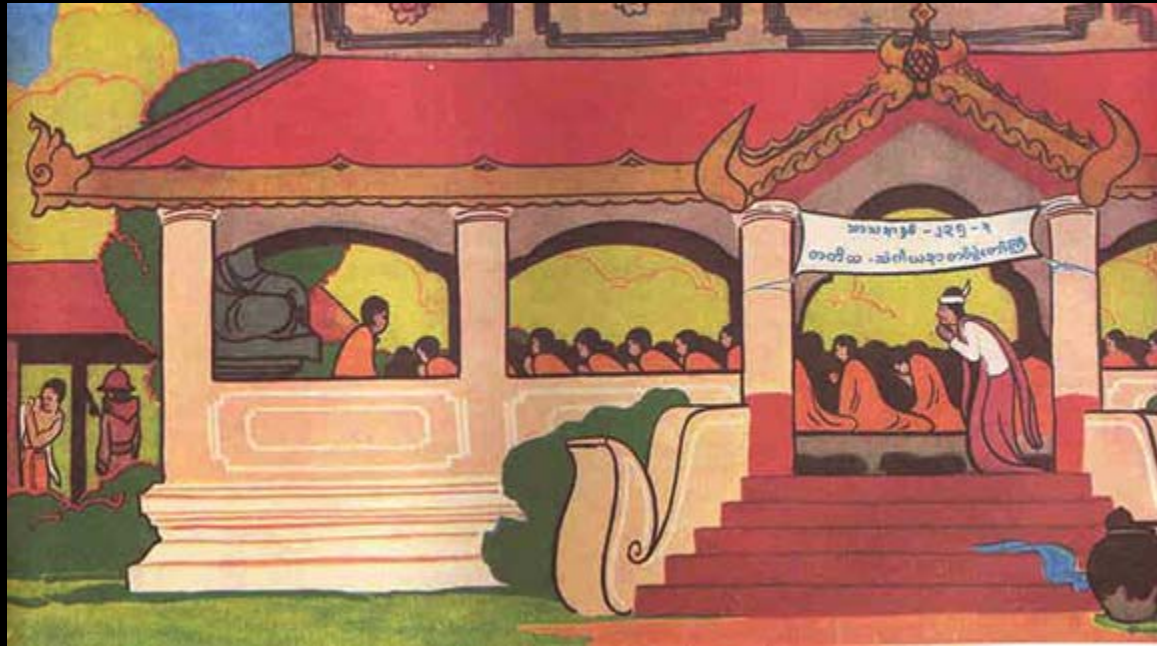


Asoka built many Buddhist stupas and viharas (Buddhist dwelling places).

Above: The Great Stupa at Sanchi (number 1), built in the time of Asoka.

The *Parinirvana Sūtra* mentions relics of the Buddha such as teeth.

Legend says Asoka dug up all the relics of the Buddha and redistributed them into 84,000 stupas.



Aśoka convened the third council around 250 BCE. There he expelled 60,000 dissident monks and nuns who held “heretical” views.

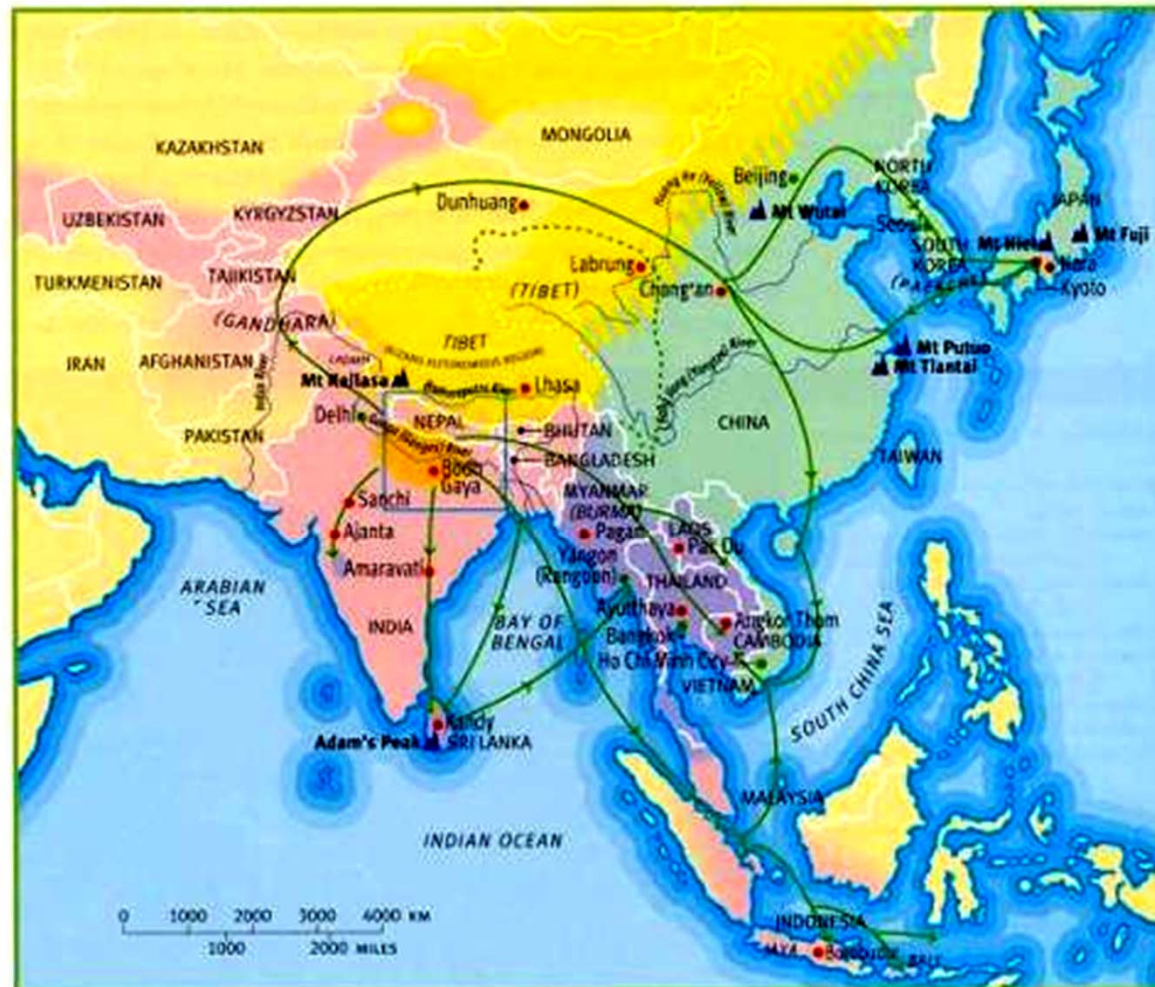
This may have been written in scriptures later by Theravada Buddhists.

It seems to violate Aśoka’s own edict not to cause disharmony in the sangha.

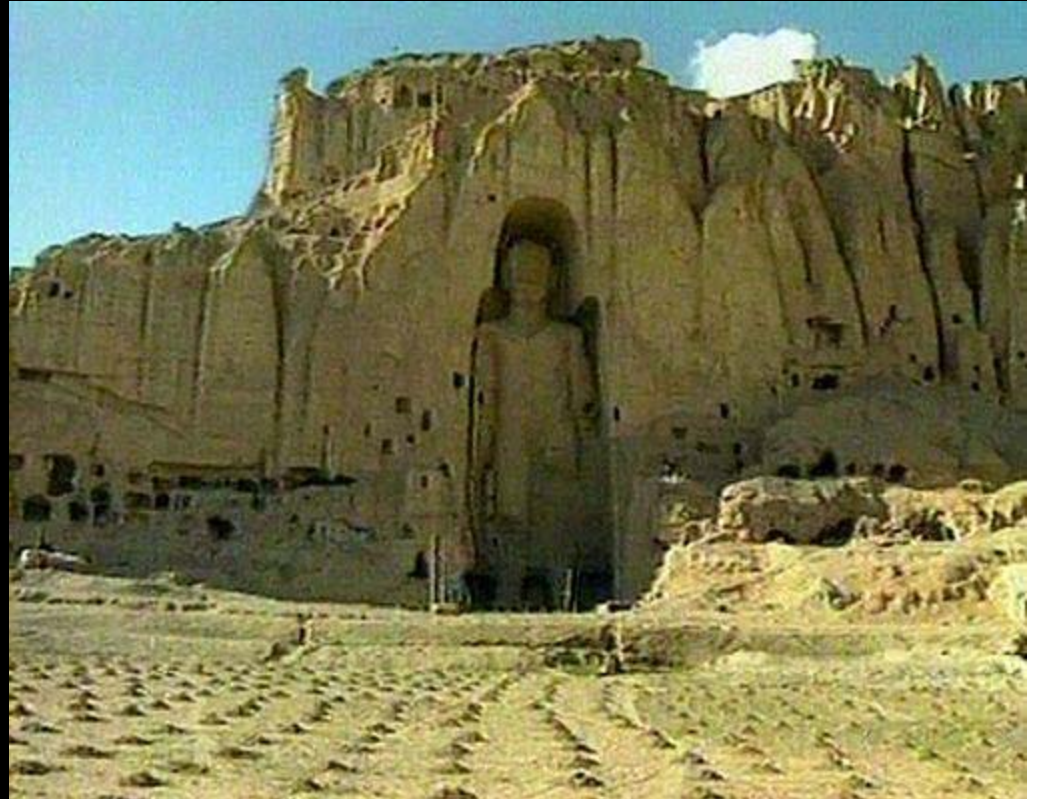
BUDDHISM IN ASIA

Key

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Ancient Buddhist heartland |  Main transmission routes of Buddhism |
|  Early area of Buddhism |  Site of special Buddhist significance |
|  Mahayana Buddhism |  Site of significance in the life of the Buddha |
|  Theravada Buddhism |  Other town or city |
|  Tantric Buddhism |  Sacred mountain |
|  Former Sino-Tibetan border |  Historical region |

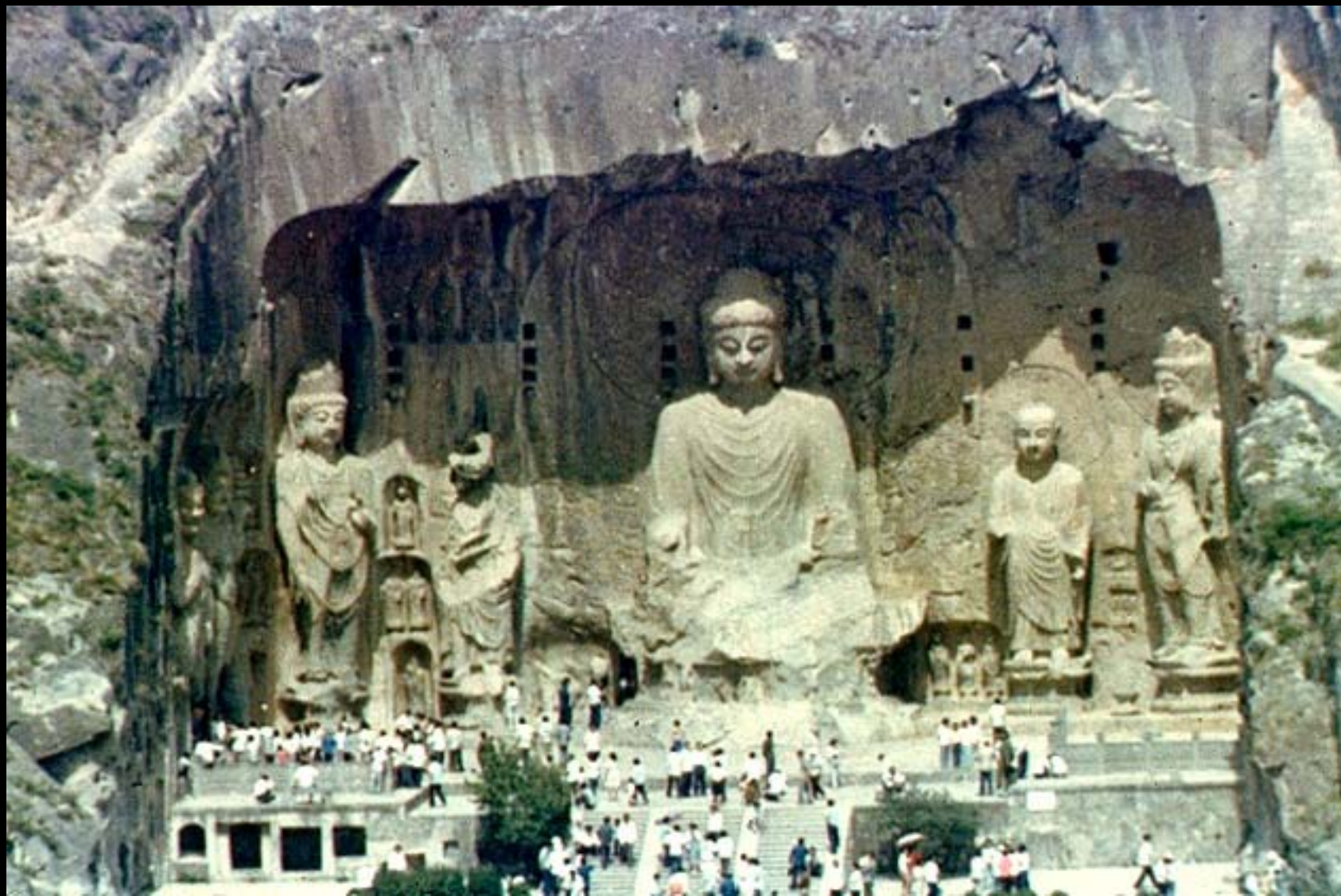






180 feet tall, the tallest Buddha figure in the world. Built 6th century CE.







Kamakura, Japan. 1252 CE



Shitenno-ji temple in Osaka, Japan.

Built by Prince Shotoku in 593 CE in fulfillment of his promise to do so if the Buddhist deities would help him kill all those in his the rival clan, the Mononobe.

Socially Engaged Buddhism:

- 1. Involvement of Buddhists in resolving social problems or alleviating suffering caused by such problems.**
- 2. Attempts to actualize traditional Buddhist ideas of wisdom and compassion.**
- 3. Reorientation of Buddhist soteriology (salvation).**

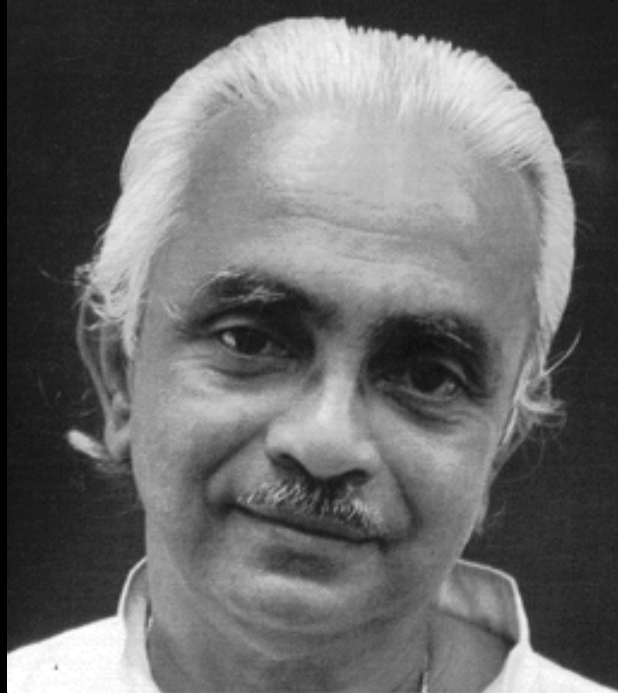
Examples: The First Noble Truth is interpreted as general social dissatisfaction.

Suffering leads to compassion.

Not "I suffer" but "There is suffering."

Middle Path reinterpreted: A country and a person should be neither too poor nor too rich.





**Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne,
Founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka**

Shramadana = donating one's labor without material rewards



Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832 – February 17, 1907)

was an American military officer, journalist, lawyer and the co-founder and first President of the Theosophical Society.

He revived Buddhism in Sri Lanka and is still honored for this.

- The term *Sarvodaya* was coined by Gandhi and means "Universal Awakening."
- Sarvodaya encourages awakening and liberation as a two fold process: it should bring change in the inner person as well as the outer structures of society.
- This incorporates spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political development.



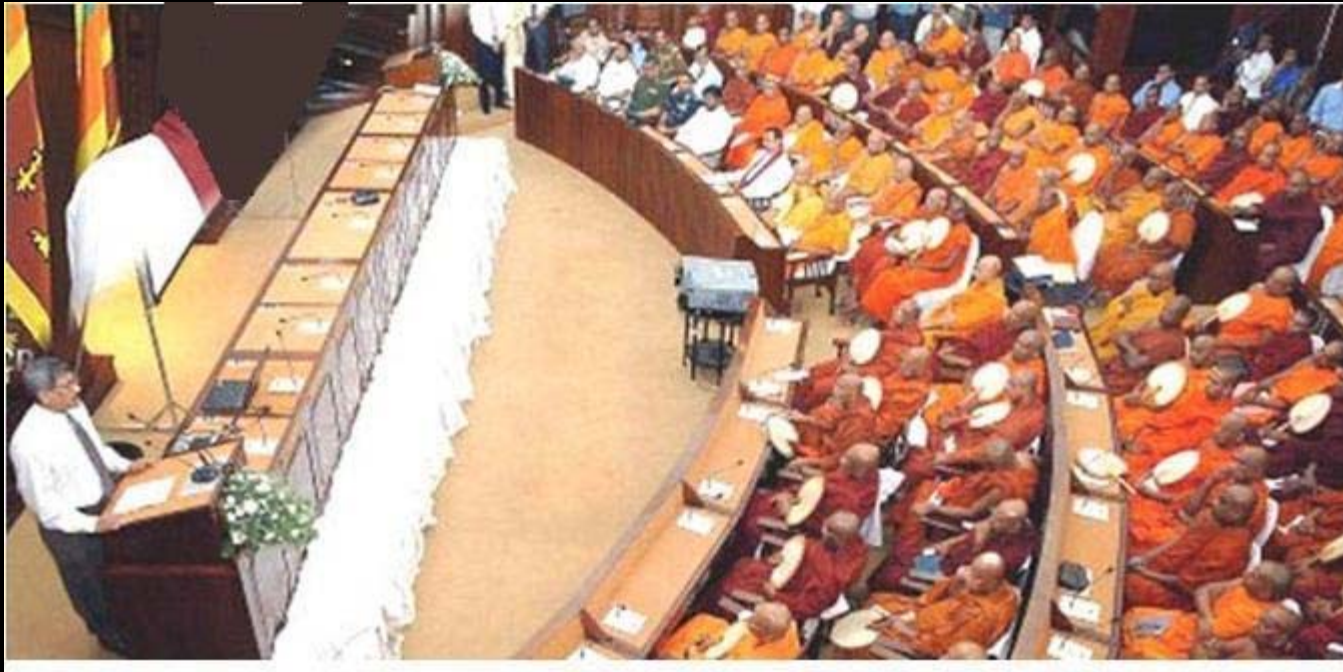


Vipassana at a prison in India.



Vipassana at a prison in Seattle.

Ten days of isolating silence. Ten hours a day of meditation, beginning at 4:30 a.m. Very little food. No TV, no books, no mail, no exercise, no smokes, no meat. And no sleeping during meditation, which is no small feat for sleep-deprived inmates propped on pillows in a darkened room.



NY Times, Feb. 25, 2007

Called the National Heritage Party, monks now hold nine seats in Sri Lanka's 225-member Parliament.

Asked about the involvement of Buddhist clerics in affairs of the state, a monk fired back, "Is politics polluted? Was Mao Zedong polluted? Was Mahatma Gandhi polluted?"

A monk was responsible for the assassination of the country's first prime minister in 1959.

In a bizarre scene three years ago monks brawled on the floor of Parliament.



Sri Lankan monks have also joined the army in large numbers.

Above: in 1998, a monk examines a weapon.

Monks opposed the Tamil Tigers, who carried out attacks for decades.