

# Ancient Indian and Chinese philosophy



In the West, the term ***Eastern (Oriental) philosophy*** refers very broadly to the various philosophies of “the East”, namely Asia, including China, India, Japan, Persia and other areas.

One must take into account that this term ignores that these countries do not belong to a single culture.



Ancient eastern philosophy developed mainly in **India and China**. The Indian or Hindu schools of philosophy can be considered the oldest schools of philosophy.

# Ancient Indian philosophy



Ancient Indian civilization has some special features. These are:

\* Rigid (жесткий) caste social structure.

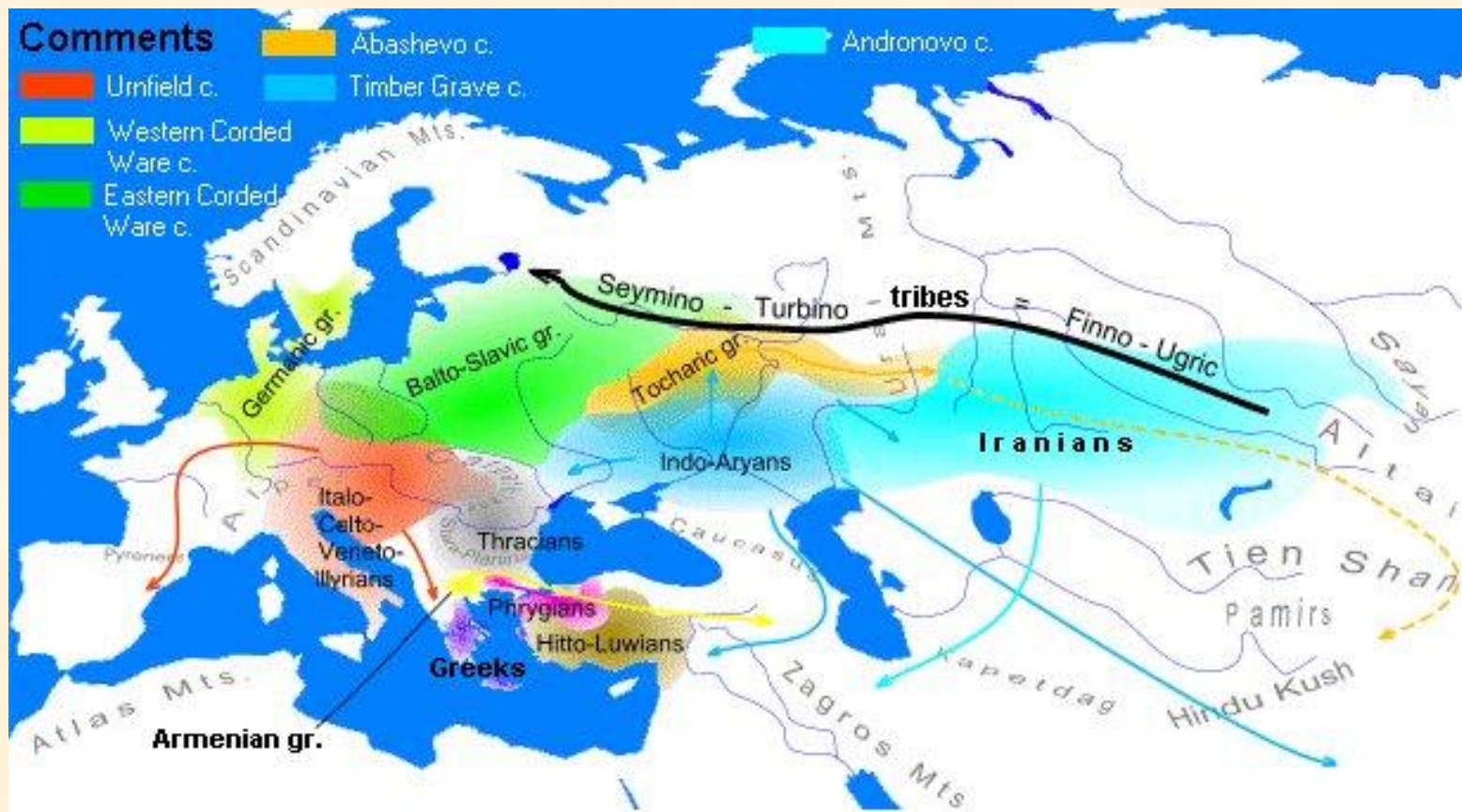


\* Intellectual and religious passivity of people.

\* The priority of the irrational over the rational.



# Civilization of ancient India was formed in the synthesis of local cultures and alien people from the North – Aryans

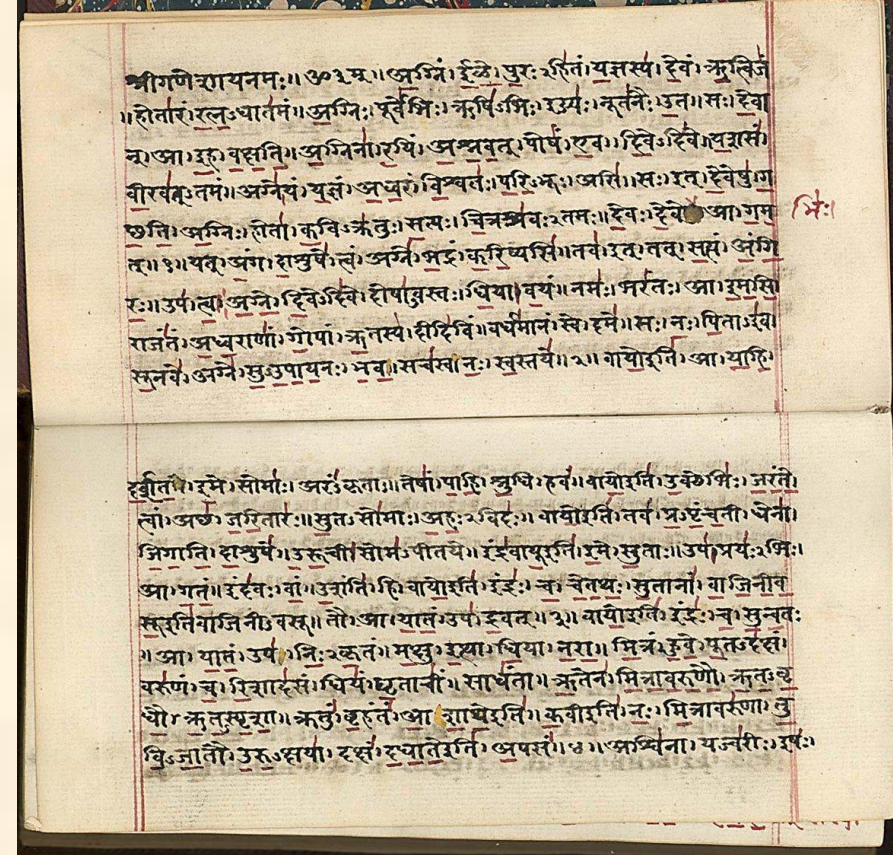




The development of ancient Indian philosophy consists of two periods: the **Vedic** and **Classical**.



**Rig-Veda**  
(Sanskrit ऋग्वेद,  
«Veda hymns») is  
a collection of  
religious hymns,  
the first known  
monument of  
Indian literature.



The word «**veda**» means «**knowledge**» and comes from the root «vid-», (Sanskrit «know»), that reconstructed from Proto-Indo-European root «weid», meaning «to see» or «to know». «Weid-» is source of English word «wit», as well as the Latin «**vision**».

**Rig-Veda** contains an extreme pluralism: the gods, people, animals, plants, elements, seasons, countries, qualities of body, spiritual abilities, etc. are animate (*одушевленные*) substances, which are connected with each other and can transform into one another.

At the heart of cosmos there is an eternal substance – **Brahman**. It is identical to the eternal inner core (*ядро*) of the individual **Atman**.

The world and its phenomena are considered as the improvement of the primary entity (**Purusha**). Purusha is also understood to be the *first person*, which consists of *castes*.

Head corresponds to the caste of **Brahmins** (priests).

Hands – to the caste of the **Kshatriyas** (the military or ruling class).

Feet – **Vaisya** caste (merchants, artisans).

Footsteps – **Sudras** caste (servants).

There were also **untouchables**, that is, most lower of the castes.



Universal law, which operates in the past, present and future called **karma**.

**Samsara** is a cycle of repeated rebirth.

If a person adheres to a strict asceticism, his samsara ceases (*прекращается*), and he reaches a state of **nirvana**, that means **fading**. Ce'ssation (*прекращение*) of rebirth is called **moksha**.

According to a traditional principle of classification, the schools or systems of Indian philosophy are divided into two broad classes, namely, **orthodox** (astika) & **heterodox** (nastika).

These are regarded as orthodox, not because they believe in god, but because they accept the **authority of the Vedas.**

To the first group belong  
the six chief philosophical  
systems (popularly known as  
*sad-darsana*):

- **Mīmāṃsā (Prabhakara)**, the tradition of Vedic exegesis (*толкование*) of sacrifice (*жертвоприношения*)
- **Vedānta (Badarayana)**, teaching about the origin of the world from Brahman

- **Samkhya (Kapila)**, the school of enumeration or “reasonable deliberation” (разумное взвешивание, обдумывание):  
atheistic pluralism – the first substance is not connected with the spirit

- **Yoga (Patanjali)**, practice of contemplation, theoretical basis is the Samkhya, but it acknowledged (*признавать*) a personal God.
- **Nyaya (Akshapada Gotama)**, the school of logic



- **Vaisesika (Kanada)**, the atomistic school, looking for identify the differences among all that is opposed in the outer and inner worlds. It saw the emancipation of a human soul in the separation of soul from all material.

During next **classical period**, there appears an interest in **ethical issues**. Agnostics, materialists and fatalists oppose the Brahmins and the reformists.

**Buddhism** (Pali बुद्ध धम्म, Buddha Dhamma, “Teaching of Awakening (Пробужденный)”) is a religious-philosophical doctrine (*dharma*) of spiritual awakening (*bodhi*), which arose about in the VI century B.C. and based on the ideas of Buddha Shakyamuni

At the core of Buddhism is the doctrine of the Four high-minded (*благородный*) Truths:

- suffering,
- the origin and causes of suffering,
- a true cessation of suffering,
- the true ways to stop suffering.

In Buddhism it's proposed median (*срединный*), or the Eightfold Path (*Восьмеричный Путь*) of achieving Nirvana. This path is directly related to the cultivation of three varieties of virtues: morality, concentration and wisdom.

# Eightfold Path

1. Righteous faith.

2. The true determination  
(решимость).

3. Righteous speech.

4. Righteous deeds (дела).

5. Saintliness (Праведная жизнь).

6. Righteous thoughts.

7. Righteous intentions (помыслы).

8. True contemplation.



**Jainism** preaches non-violence to all living beings in this world. Philosophy and practice of Jainism is based primarily on the cultivation of soul to attain om'niscience (*всеведение*), om'nipotence (*всесилие*) and eternal bliss (*блаженство*).



**Lokayata** (also Charvaq, Skt. चार्वाक) is a materialist doctrine of ancient India.

Lokayata is a belief in the real world (**loka**) and disbelief in the existence of the underworld.

# Ancient Chinese philosophy



# The main features of ancient Chinese philosophy are:

- Practical orientation of philosophical constructions.
- Absence of strict categorical framework.
- The domination of the ethical issues.

Considering all things as a unity of opposites (**Yang – Yin**), Chinese thinkers have explained the endless process of moving through their dialectical interaction.

Yin and yang is a Chinese symbol of balance and harmony, and the opposite forces of nature.

The symbol has two colours, White and Black which symbolize nature's balance of forces such as Good and Evil, Up and Down, Light and Dark, Male and Female, Life and Death, etc.

Basically, this symbol represents the Positive and Negative forces in the Universe. This symbol has been used in Asia for a long time, and has become popular in the rest of the world, too.

In Chinese mythology, it is allocated the highest principle, which rules the world, the existence of things. This principle is sometimes understood as the highest personified ruler (**Shang-di**), but more often as the word “the heaven” (**Tian**).

During this period, freely and creatively there were six major philosophical schools.



- 1) School of **Confucians**;
- 2) School of **yin and yang**;
- 3) School of **moism** (Mo-jia);
- 4) School of **names** (Ming-jia);
- 5) School of **lawyers, legists** (Fa jia);
- 6) School of **Taoism** (Tao Jia).

**Confucianism** is the philosophy based on the teachings of Confucius, who was an important Chinese philosopher. Confucianism has a complex system of moral, social, political, and religious thought, and has had a large influence on the history of Chinese civilization.

Confucianism focuses on the ethical rules, social norms and regulation control.

**Confucius** (551-479 BC), his name is Latinized version of the name Kung Fu Tzu (teacher Kun). He is one of the first Chinese thinkers, philosophers.

Confucianism was made to stop the fall of Chinese society. After the Zhou Dynasty fell, people cared only for themselves and did not have any respect for others. Confucianism became a social order for China, teaching that social relationships are the most important.

People slowly started to believe in it, because they wanted to have peace, but they had to care for themselves, too. As a result, Confucianism brought the people love, harmony, and respect for one another.

先師孔子行教像



唐吳道子筆



The teachings of Confucius focus largely on the respect of one's parents, elders, and ancestors.



Also, he taught that humans 'can never stop learning'; meaning that knowledge is infinite, therefore we will always learn, never stopping. For example, he once asked a seven-year-old child to be his teacher, because the child knew something that he did not.

Confucianism can be considered as the oldest school of philosophy in China.





Ethics of Confucius explained human in connection with his social functions, and education is to bring people to the execution (*исполнение*) of these functions.



The social order (**Li**) Confucius had established through the ideal of universality, respect to nature and, especially, relations between people.

This realization of functions and order based on the order leads to the manifestation of humanity (**Ren**).

Another important feature of the social order is strong **obedience** (повиновение) to elders, respect to them.

**State** is a big **family**, and family is a small state.

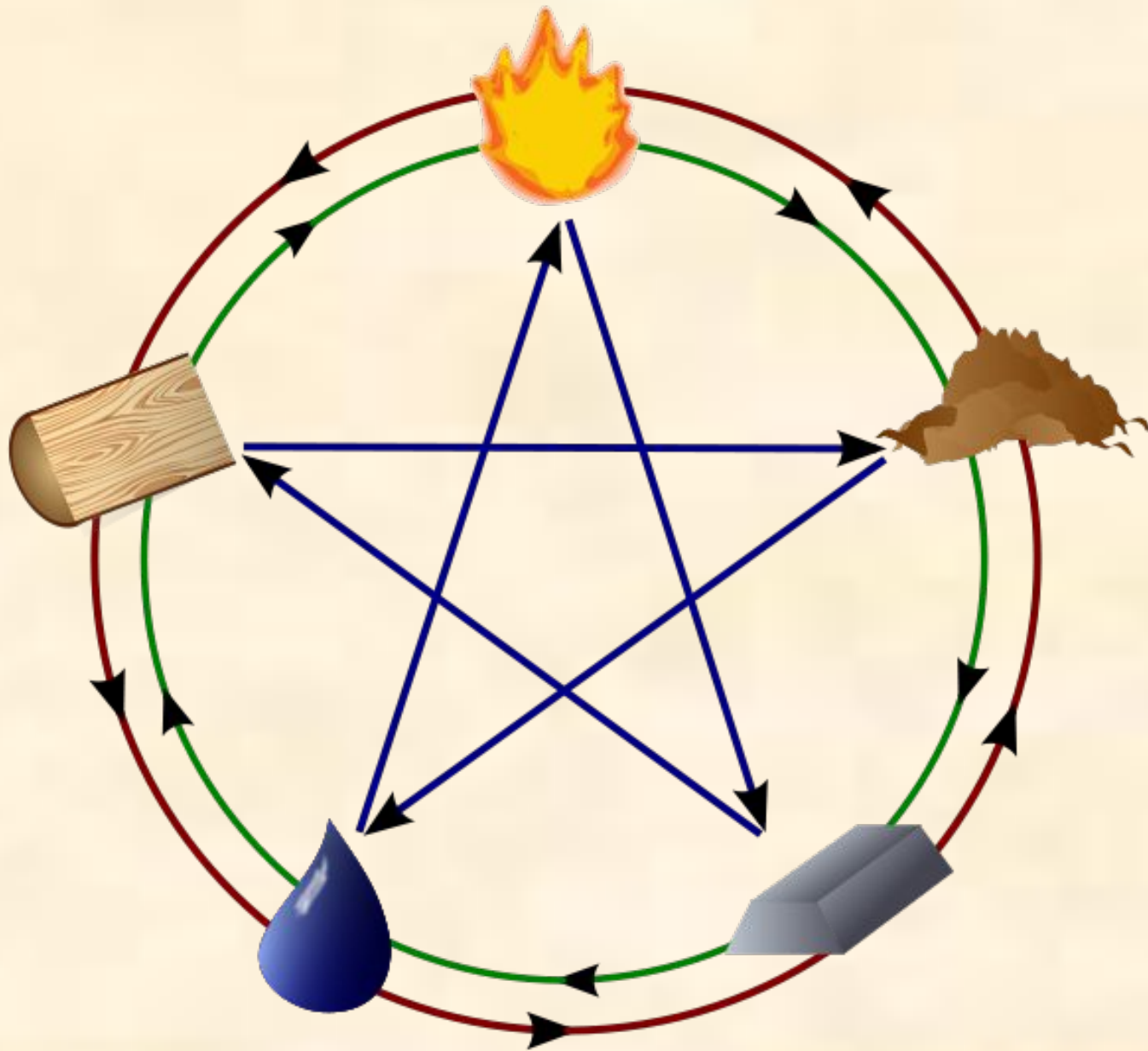
**Ren (仁)** – humanity, love for people (***tree***)

**I (义)** – the truth, justice (***metal***)

**Li (礼)** – custom, ceremony, ritual (***fire***)

**Zhi (智)** – common sense, wisdom (***water***)

**Xin (信)** – sincerity (*искренность*), good intentions (***ground***)



**Moists** school was named after the founder Moe Dee (479-391 BC). The main attention was primarily paid to the problems of social ethics, which is connected through a strict organization with the despotic power of the head.

The whole meaning was to the ideas of universal love (**Jiang ai**) and mutual benefit for people.



**School of Names** examined the relations of things and expression of that relationship, and then the appropriation of judgments and notions.



**Legism** (Bu Hei Shen, Han Feng-tzu) is formed almost as a teaching that focused primarily on issues of legislation in the era of “warring states” (5-4 centuries BC).



It is political philosophy which say that people are bad by nature and need to be controlled by the government.



One of the most important contributors to Legalism was Han Fei Zi. He said that a ruler must use following tools to govern a state:

1. **Fa** (law or principle) The law must be known by everyone. Everybody under the ruler is equal before the law. If you do what law wants you will be rewarded. If you break the law or try to break it, you will be punished.

2. **Shu** (method, tactic or art): These are methods the ruler has to use so that nobody is able to abolish the system.

3. **Shi** (legitimacy, power or charisma): The position of the ruler is important, not the ruler himself.

One of the major directions in China, along with Confucianism, was **Taoism**. Taoism studied that nature, space and people find themselves in movement. Taoism began to learn universe through direct penetration into the conceptual nature of its existence.

The world is in constant motion and change, evolving, living and acting on impulse (*спонтанно*), without any reason. In ontological doctrine Tao is a central concept. The purpose of thinking, in Taoism, is “merger” (*слияние*) between man and nature, because of he is its part.

**Lao Tzu** (old teacher) is a senior contemporary of Confucius.

He wrote the book “**Tao Te Ching**”, which became the basis for further development of Taoism.

