Ancient Indian and Chinese philosophies

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 caste social structure.

Intellectual and religious passivity of people.

The priority of the irrational over the rational.

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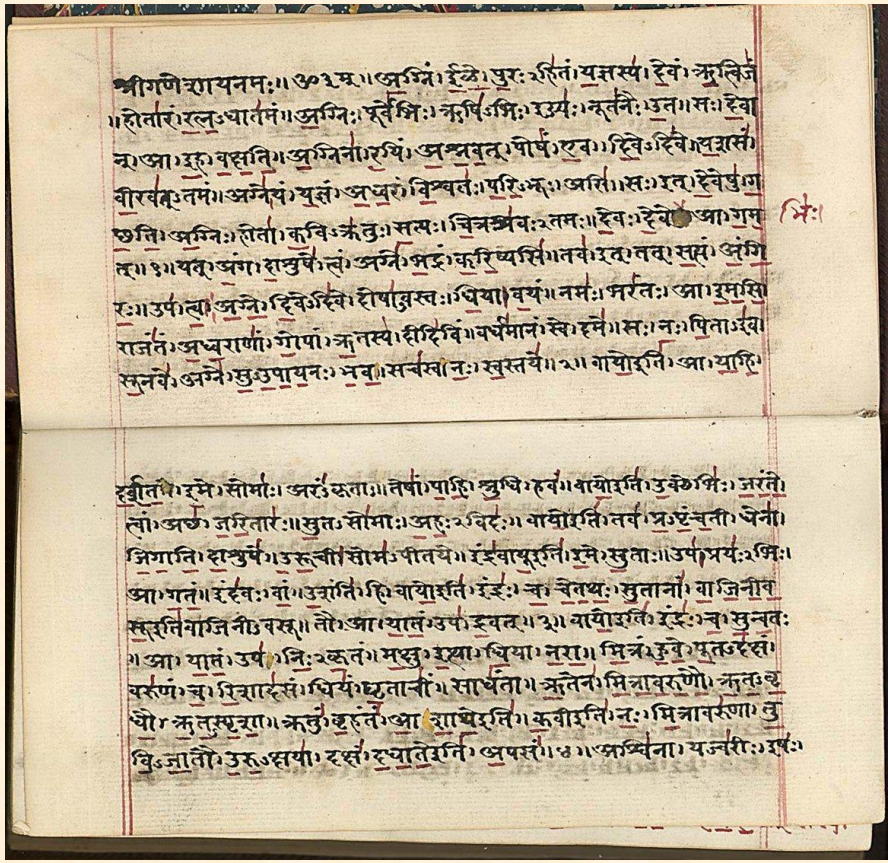
Civilization of ancient India was formed in the synthesis of local cultures and alien people from the North – **Aryans**

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

Rig-Veda

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

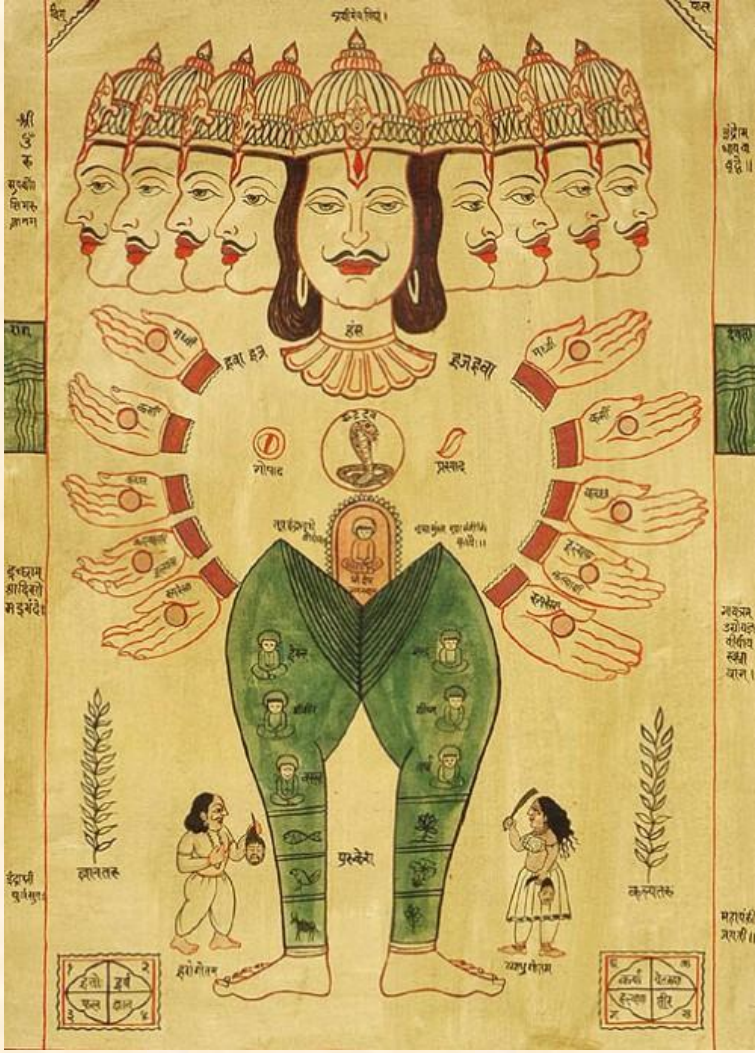


The word «**veda**» means «**knowledge**» and comes from the root «vid-», (Sanskrit «know»), that reconstructed from Proto-Indo-European root «weid», meaning «to see» or «to know». «Weid-» is source of English word «wit», as well as the Latin «**vision**».

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 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).

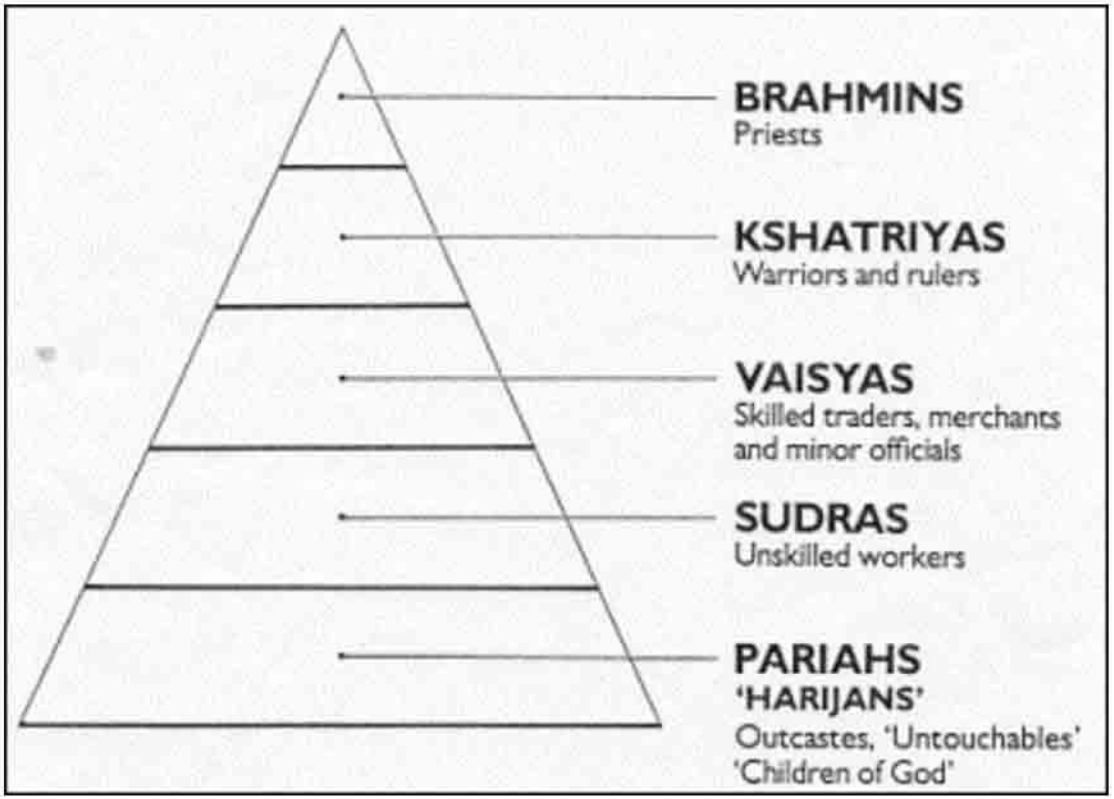
Hands – to the caste of the **Kshatriyas** (the military or ruling class).

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

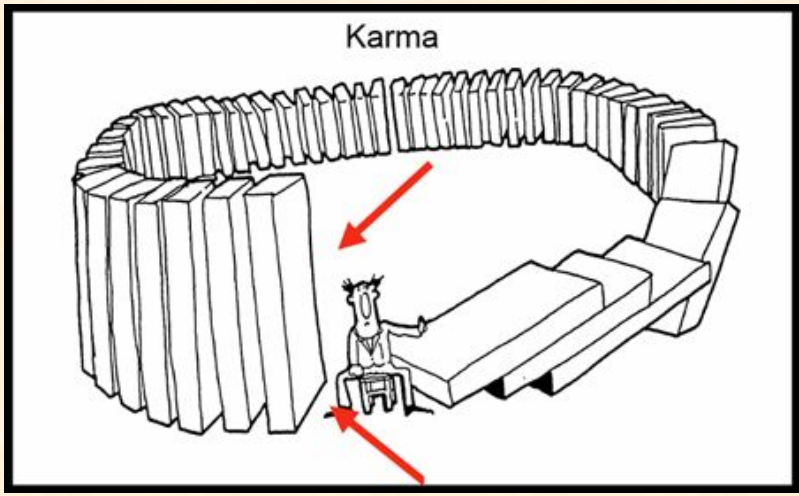
Footsteps – **Sudras** caste (servants).

There were also **untouchables** (pariah), that is, the outcastes.

The Indian Caste System



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 (сиис) (*прекращается*), and he reaches a state of **nirvana**, that means **fading**.

Cessation (сэсейшн)(*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***):

- **Mimamsa (**Prabhakara**)**, the tradition of Vedic exegesis (*толкование*) of sacrifice (*жертвоприношения*)
- **Vedanta (**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

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

- **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.

To the second group belong next three philosophical systems:

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 there is a 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 virtues:

- *Morality,*
- *Concentration,*
- *Wisdom.*

Eightfold Path

1. Righteous faith.
2. The true determination.
3. Righteous speech.
4. Righteous deeds.
5. Saintliness(Праведная жизнь).
6. Righteous thoughts.
7. Righteous intentions (помыслы).
8. True contemplation. (Истина в созерцании и молчании)

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.

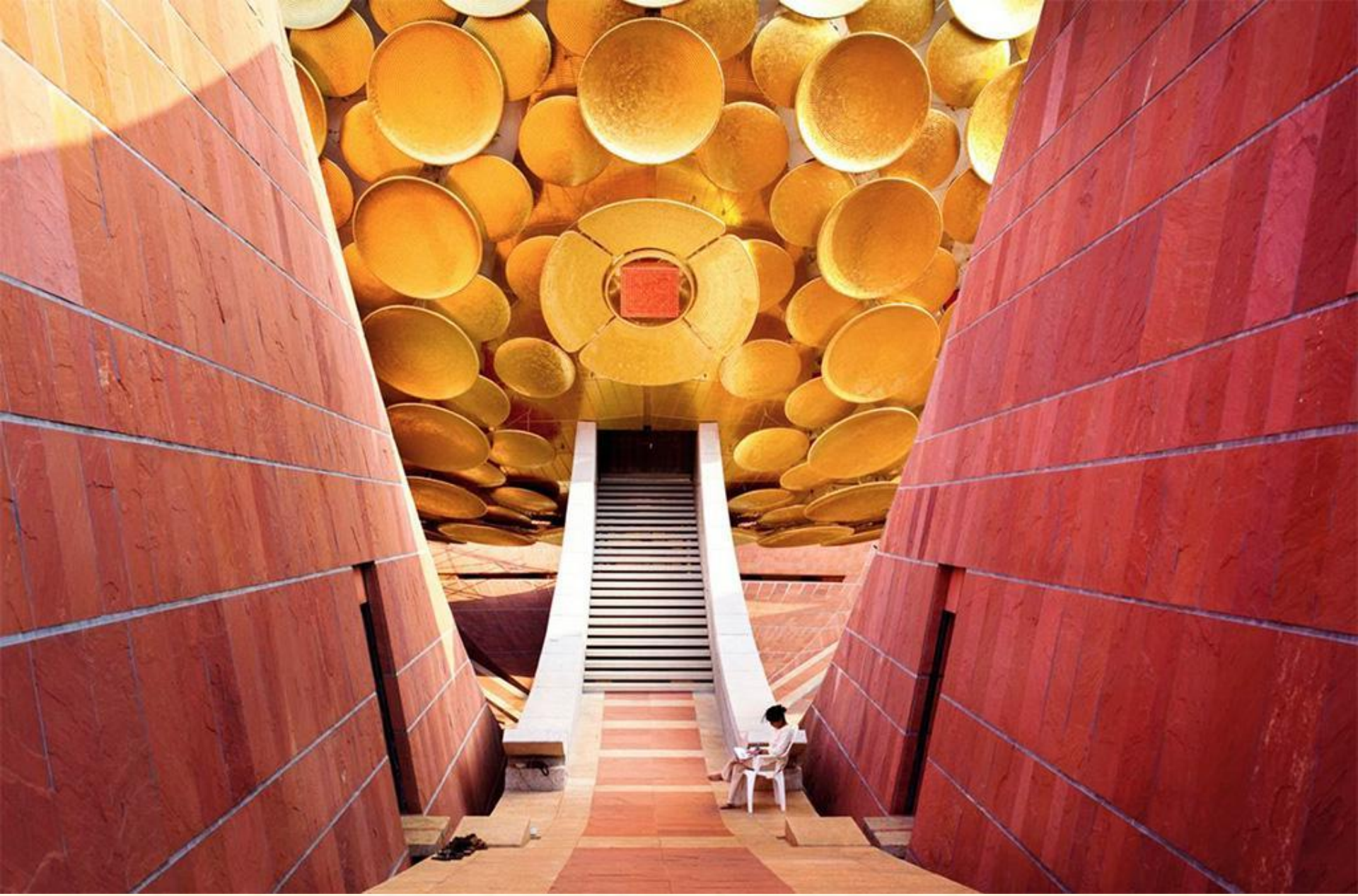
Auroville (City of Dawn)

is an experimental township in in the state of Tamil Nadu, near Puducherry in South India.

Matrimandir in Auroville

Auroville (City of Dawn)

It was founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa (known as “The Mother”), a follower of **Sri Aurobindo**. As Alfassa stated “Auroville is meant to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity.”



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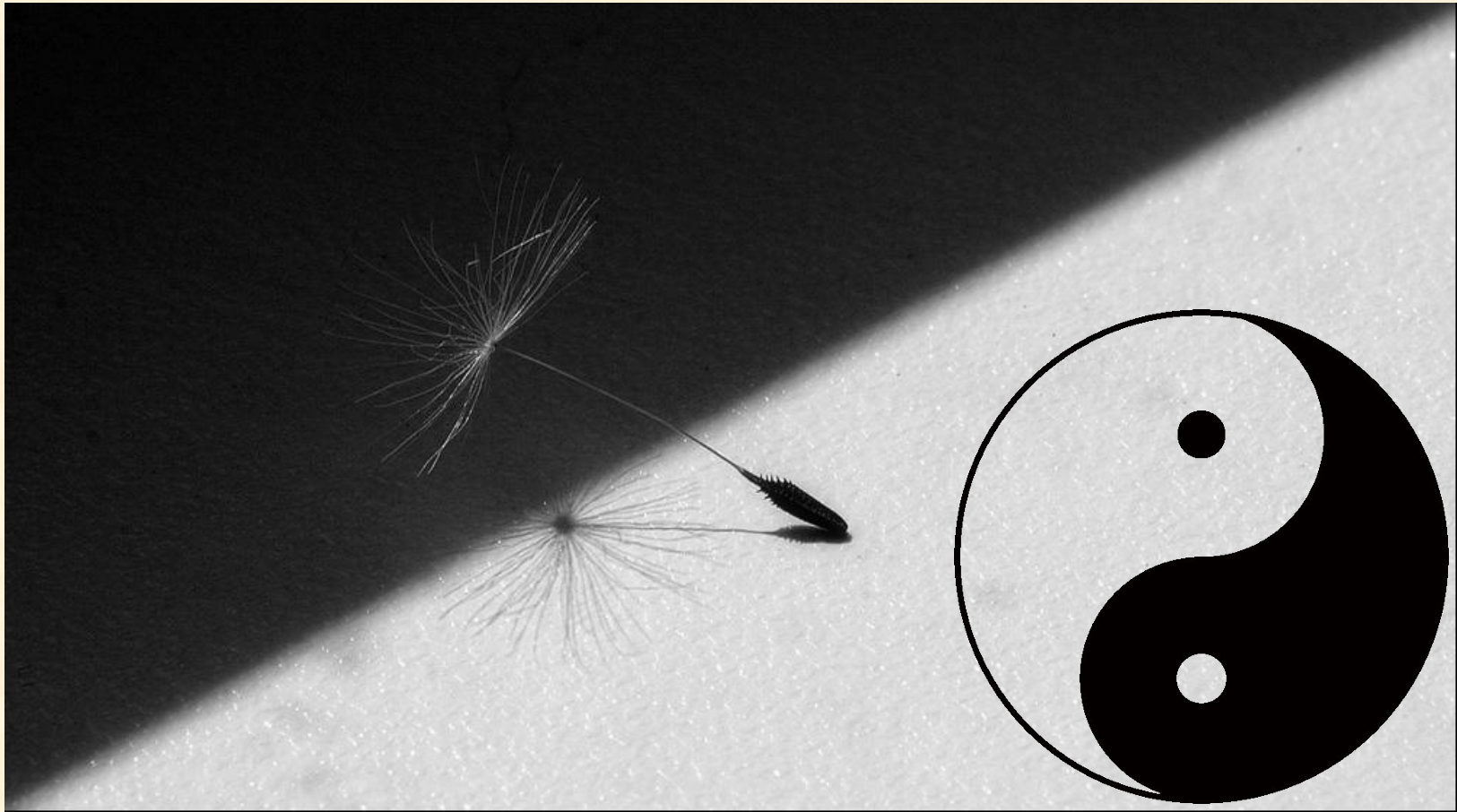
Ancient Chinese philosophy

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.



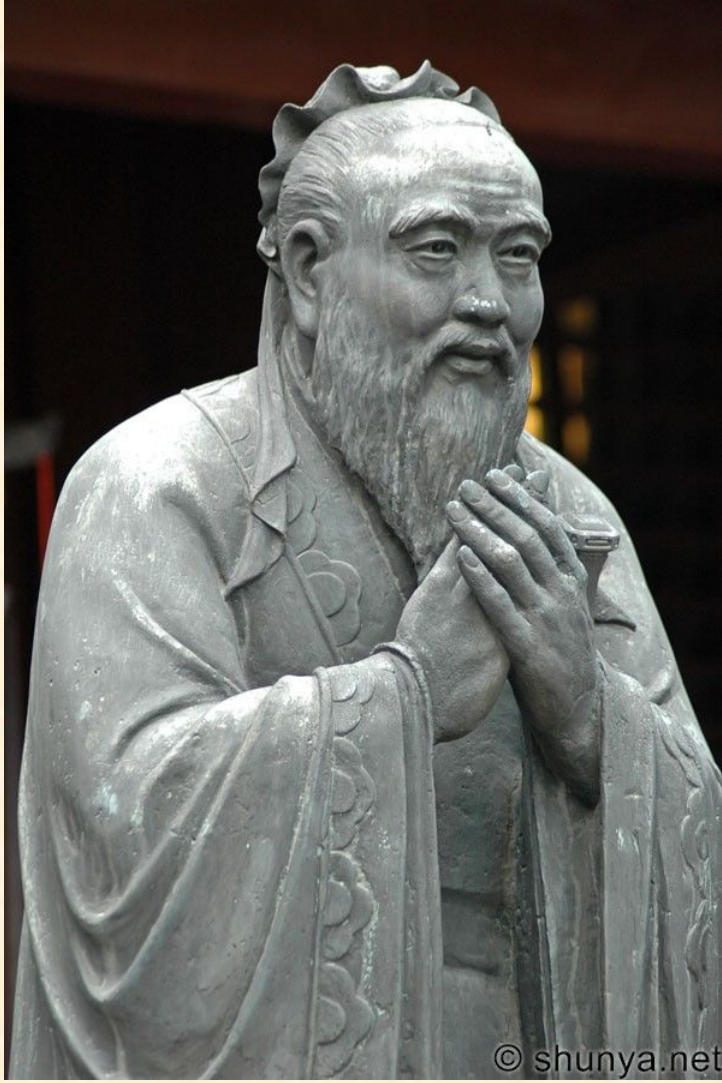
In Chinese mythology, it is allocated the highest principle, which rules the world, the existence of things. This principle is sometimes understood as the highest personified ruler (**Shang-di**), but more often as the word “the Heaven” (**Tian**).

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

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

Confucius thought that there were five relationships people could have, and that they all had their own rules. Two people could be:

- Prince and Subject
- Father and Son
- Husband and Wife
- Elder and Child
- or Friends

The social order (**Li**) Confucius had established through the ideal of universality, respect to nature and, especially, relations between people. Confucius wanted people to think about other people more than about money or what they owned. However he also felt that there should be strong rules in society and that people needed to obey them.

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

Ren consists of 5 basic virtues:

- Seriousness,
- Generosity (великодушие),
- Sincerity (искренность),
- Diligence (усердие),
- and Kindness.

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.

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.

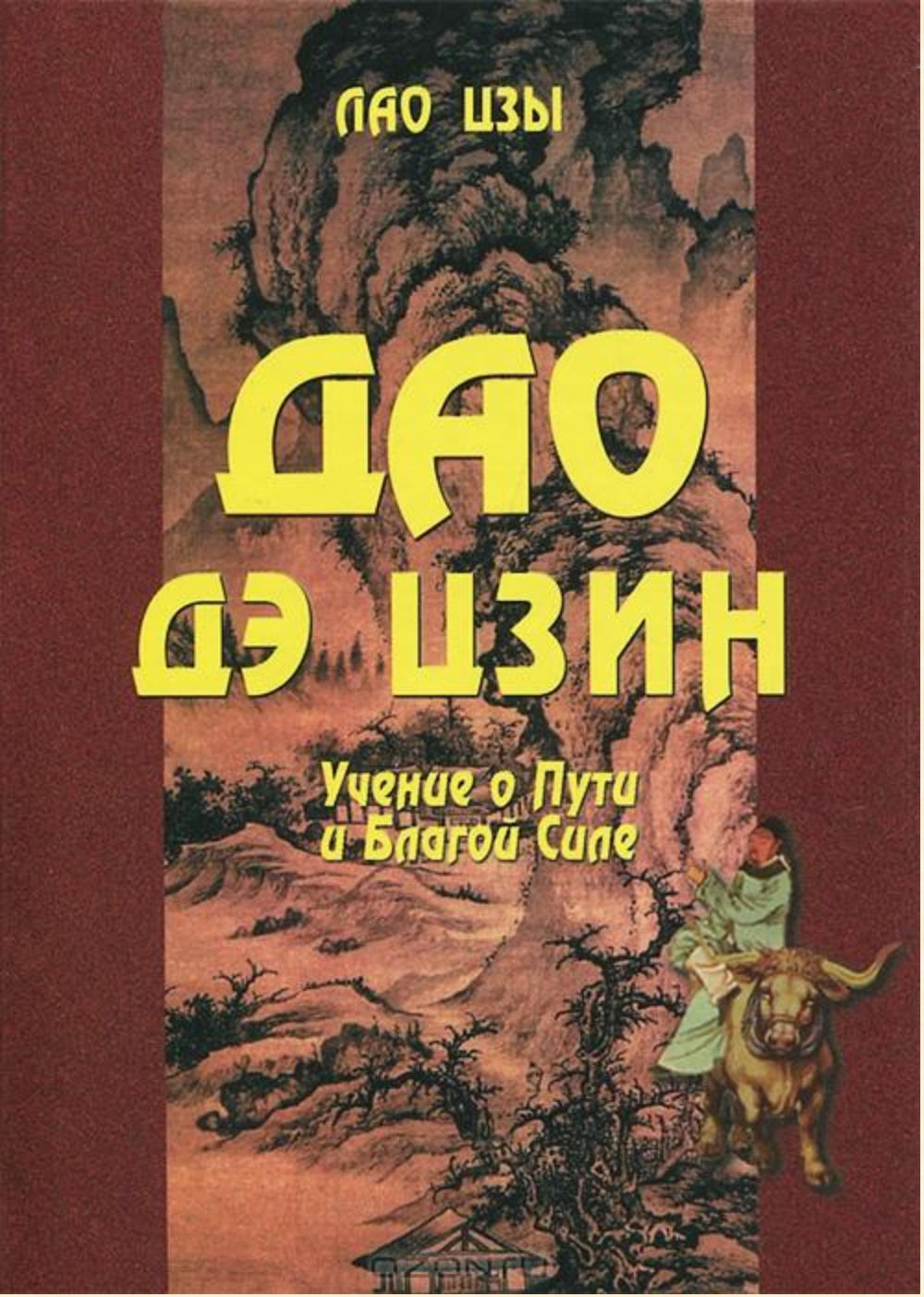
School of Names (*Míngjiā*)
examined the relations of things and expression of that relationship, and then the appropriation of judgments and notions.

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).

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, without any reason. In ontological doctrine Tao is a central concept. The purpose of thinking, in Taoism, is “merger” (*слияние*) between human and nature, because of he is its element.

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



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

Zen (Chán) is a school of Buddhism. It developed in China in the 6th century. From China it spread to Vietnam (Thiền), Korea (Seon) and Japan (Zen).

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Zen is the Japanese version of the Chinese Ch'uan or Chán. It has a distinctive style. It is not so much a set of beliefs as a set of practices. Those practices center around the personal efforts of the would-be master to attain *satori* (translated as enlightenment).

Central to Zen is the practice of *dhyana* or *meditation*.

Thank you for reading)