Caves and Temples of India

A talk at the ULT, Sunday 21st January 2018

The Elephanta Hindu caves

The Kanheri Buddhist cave complex

The Gommateshwara statue to Bahubali and its Jain temple
The Elephanta caves

Gharapuri Island, Mumbai Harbour

One of the most sacred Hindu Siva cave temples. Unknown date, estimated c. 500 CE however esoteric writing suggests a site was located there from earlier epochs.
1 hour cruise from the Gateway of India
Elephanta Island, Gharapuri Place of Caves
Elephanta, East Court

The main cave is on right, 128 ft deep from the front to back.

In total the 7 caves cover an area of 60,000 sq ft.

(equiv. 250 ft by 250 ft)
SadaSiva, the three faces of the “Trimurti”

The Sanskrit prefix sada translates as "always" and "forever." Sadashiva is perceived as the eternally pure and auspicious.

Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva (from R to L)
Brahma, the first face of the Trimurti

Long ear lobes show the yogic faculty for clairaudience
The floor, ceiling and pillars are carved from the living rock, black and yellow basalt.

Original builders are unknown, possibly by the Morya dynasty.
Resources

Short video on the history and significance of the Elephanta caves.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCcSYOowrXg
The Buddhist Kanheri caves
Sanjay Gandhi National Park
40 kms north of Mumbai

Ancient cave complex from 1st c. BCE -10th c. CE comprising 109 caves carved from solid basalt rock.
Kanheri Valley

Mumbai City is in the background.

Kanheri comes from the Sanskrit Krishnagiri, black mountain.
Great Hall, the Kanheri complex
The congregation hall with huge stone pillars and stupa, Buddhist shrine.
These larger caves functioned as places of worship.

Smaller caves were viharas for living, studying and meditating.
Later converted to a monastery the walls were carved with intricate reliefs of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.
a Buddhist meditator

He employs a mudra-hand gesture for concentrating to reach serenity and peace
Monsoon in August, 35 deg C, 95 deg F and 80% humidity

Rock cut channels collect rainwater to feed the storage cisterns for the community.
Columns reflect similar geometry and symbolism to those in Elephanta.
A monk's cave

Stone plinth for a bed with an ideally quiet meditation space
Kanheri became a well-known university center (vihara) when under the Maurya empire.

In 10th c. the Buddhist teacher Atisha came to study meditation.
Lineage Buddha & Shakya Kings

1. Ikshvaku  
   (Okkaka in Pali)
2. Okkamukha
3. Sivisamjaya
4. Sihassara
5. Jayasena

6. Sihahanu
7. Suddhodana
8. Siddhartha  
   (Gautama Buddha)
9. Rahula  
   (from the Buddhist text Mahavamsa II, 1-24)
As Prince Siddhartha was preparing to leave the palace he received news that his wife Yashodhara bore a son. He replied "A rāhu is born, a fetter has arisen." Accordingly, the child was named Rāhula, meaning "fetter." He recognised the child could become a tie that bound him and impede his dharmic duty to search for enlightenment. In the Dhammapada the pleasures and joys from family and children are called "soft fetters," as they create ties to life, suffering, and the eventual loss and separation of loved ones. Behind these are deeper, subtler ties to cyclic existence (samsara).
Rāhula was raised by his mother, Yasodharā; when seven he requested to see his father. Shortly afterwards the Buddha returned to Kapilavastu.

Yasodharā took Rāhula to see his father and told him that since his father had renounced the palace life he should ask for the inheritance of his crown so he could succeed his grandfather.

The Buddha thought to himself: "He desires his father's inheritance, but it is wrought with troubles. I shall give him the benefit of my spiritual Enlightenment and make him an owner of a transcendental inheritance."

The Buddha ordained Rāhula who became the first novice monk. The king, discovering his grandson and a number of young men in the royal family had requested ordination, asked the Buddha only to ordain a minor with the consent of his parents.

Rāhula became one of the many Arhats following Buddhism.
Shortly after Rāhula's ordination the Buddha taught him the importance of always speaking the truth. This discourse is known as the Rahulo-vada Sutta. It teaches and encourages deliberate reflection on one's bodily, verbal and mental conduct, before, during and after any intentional action. It is the means by which wise beings purify their conduct.

He further advocated cultivating restraint against deliberately false speech intended to deceive and to cultivate honesty, some of the most fundamental practices of all spiritual life.

» https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rahula
Jain Statue & temple to Bahubali

“Gommateshwara”
150 kms west of Bengaluru
Shravana Belgoa town
Flowering shrubs on the steep climb up to the temple.
Bahubali, son of the first Jain tirthankara became a liberated soul after standing in meditation for a year.

He is named ‘Gommat-eshwara’ after the statue built in his honor. This is his story.
Bahubali lived during the Ikshvaku Dynasty in the time of the Puranas, the start of the 1st subrace of the 5th race. This Solar Dynasty founded by Ikshvaku is the principle lineage of ancient Indian, he is the son of Vaivashwata Manu and grandson of ‘Vivaswat Surya’, the Sun icon. Chapter 4 of the Bhagavad Gita refers to this succession. The lineage is also recorded in the Ramayana and the Puranas, being common to Jain and Hindu chronology.

1st king Ikshvaku (father of Bahubali)
81st Rama (of the Ramayana)
116th Brihadbala, killed in Mahabharata war
141st Siddartha, Gautama Buddha
147th Sumitra was last, defeated & driven from Ayodhya
Ikshvaku Dynasty chronology

The average lifespan of the early kings during the Gold to Bronze Ages (Satya to Dwapara Yugas) was >10,000 years (from the Ramayana, a Hindu text). There were 147 kings during the dynasty's duration over a period of 4 million years.

Hence the Jain’s claim great antiquity for Bahubali. 22 of the 24 Tirthankaras lived during this dynasty.

[when the Iron Age (Kali Yuga) began 5,100 years ago the lifespan of man was longer than it is now]
The Buddhist lineage of the Ishvaku (Shakya) Kings

1. **Ikshvaku** (Sanskrit; Okkaka in Pali)
2. Okkamukha
3. Sivisamjaya
4. Sihassara
5. Jayasena
6. Sihahanu
7. Suddhodana
8. **Siddhartha** (Gautama Buddha)
9. Rahula (Buddha’s son)

(from the Buddhist text Mahavamsa II, 1-24)
Shakya (Surya-Sun) Dynasty

Sanskrit ‘Sakya’ meaning “the one who can.” A clan of the late Vedic India (1,000 BCE) in N. India.

From the Kshatriya Rajput warrior caste in Hinduism, recognised in Buddhism.

Descended from Surya-Sun Bodhisattva (celestial being) later from Ikshvaku and the Maurya clan.

Notable members were Lord Rama, King Shakya, Prince Siddhartha Shakya, Buddhism’s founder, Chandragupta Maurya, founder of Maurya Empire and Ashoka, Chandragupta Maurya’s grandson and ruler of largest Indian empire.
One of the 24 Tirthankararas
The vast painted & inscribed stones of the temple’s walls in the outer court.

Bare feet at all times
Jain texts lists observances which free one from the bandha (bondage) of karma:

- Purity of right faith
- Reverence
- Observance of vows without transgressions
- Ceaseless pursuit of knowledge
- Perpetual fear of the cycle of existence
- Giving gifts (charity)
- Practising austerities according to one’s capacity
- Removal of obstacles that threaten equanimity
- Serving the meritorious
- Devotion to preceptors & scriptures
- Practice of the six essential daily duties
- Fervent affection for one’s brethren following the path.

[from the Tattvartha Sutra]
A Jain’s six essential duties

These essential duties are prescribed for śrāvakas (householders):
1. Worship of Pañca-Parameṣṭhi (five supreme beings)
2. Following the preachings of Jain saints
3. Study of Jain scriptures
4. Practising serenity and meditation
5. Following discipline in daily engagements
6. Charity (dāna) of four kinds: donation of food, medicine, knowledge and saving the life of a being or giving of protection to those under threat.

These duties are the fundamental ritual activities of a Jain householder. They can also be practiced as simple ritual acts of charity and non-violence eg spreading grain for birds in the morning or mindfully performing tasks such as filtering water for coming use.
Jain symbols of attachment
Ancient Prakrit palm leaf engraving