

# Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism: Origins, Art, and Ideas

600 BCE – 1400 CE



# Key Ideas

- Three great religions have **origins in literary and philosophical texts** of this period (derived from oral traditions): Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism.
- **Material world is an illusion**; we must understand the nature of the divine in order to escape an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (= eternal bliss).
- Art is **functional**: used in religious practice for worship and devotion to the gods.
- **Evocation of the senses** plays a role in our experience of the world as a gift of the gods.

# Vedic Tradition

- Vedas: Upanishads (insights and teachings)
- Puranas – stories/memory
- Mahabharata (Bhagavad Gita)
- Ramayana

# Buddhism: Origins and Ideas

- Buddhism emerges as a reaction to complex, ritual practices of priestly class/highest caste.
- Prince Siddhartha Gautama renounced his earthly life of luxury, meditated on how to alleviate suffering in the world, achieved enlightenment, and became “the Buddha.”
- The Buddha’s teachings were written down by his followers in the *sutras*.
- Buddha images are used to contemplate the divine/ the “Buddha nature” so that we can become like him (both teaching and sacred images).
- Buddhists seek *nirvana*, or release from an endless cycle of birth/death/rebirth.

# Buddhist Art and Culture

- After violent campaigns, Ashoka (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE) resolves to rule by spreading teachings of Buddhism through public art and establishing Buddhism as major religion.
- The Buddha is not initially represented in human form: lotus flower, wheel, bodhi tree, empty throne, footprints.
- Early Buddhist worship centered on veneration of relics housed in stupas.
- As Buddha images emerge, they reflect characteristics proclaimed in the ancient texts.
- Images are influenced by cultural encounter and exchange.

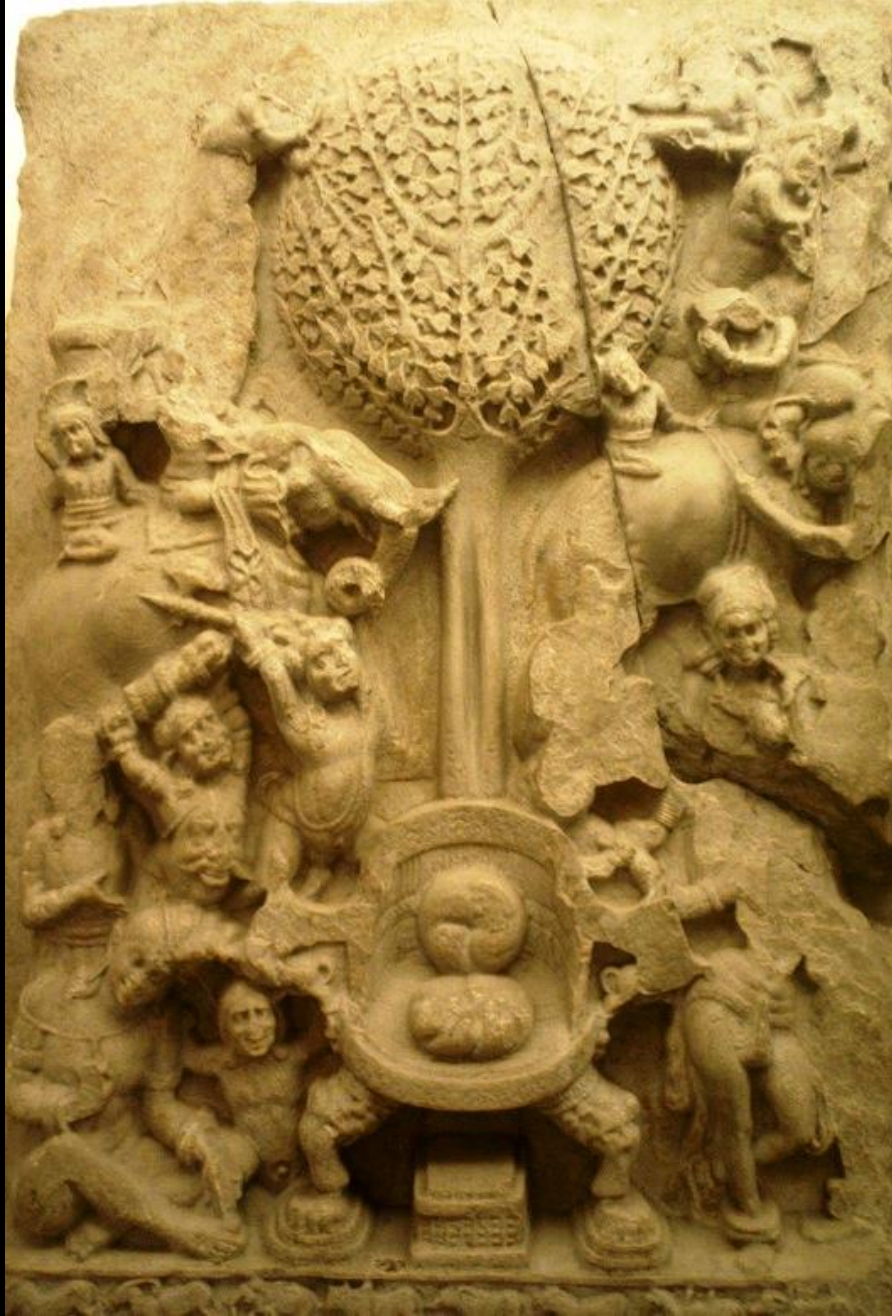
Sarnath, India, *Lion Capital* from Ashokan Pillar,  
Maurya period, c. 250 BCE, polished sandstone



Sanchi, India, *Worship of the Prayer Wheel*,  
2nd-1st century BCE



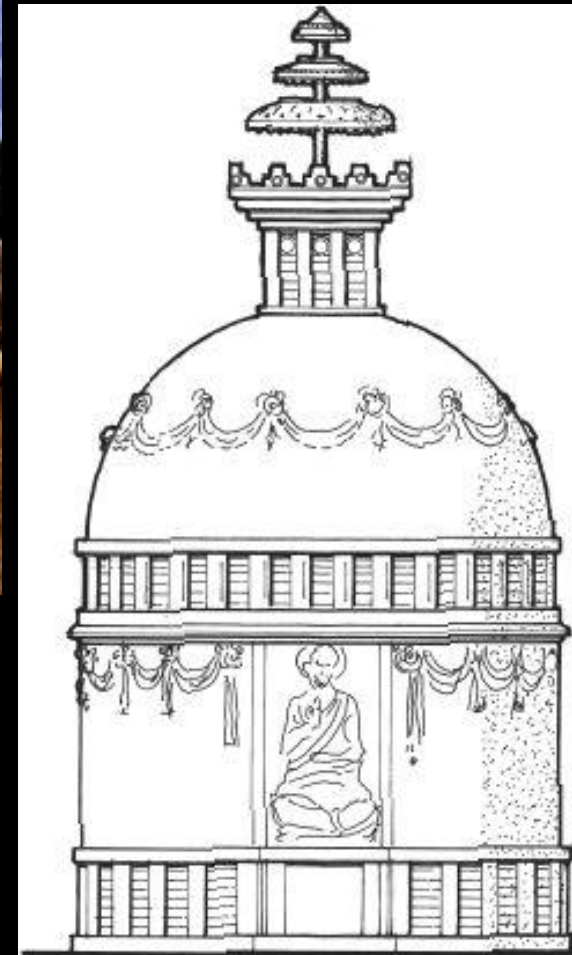




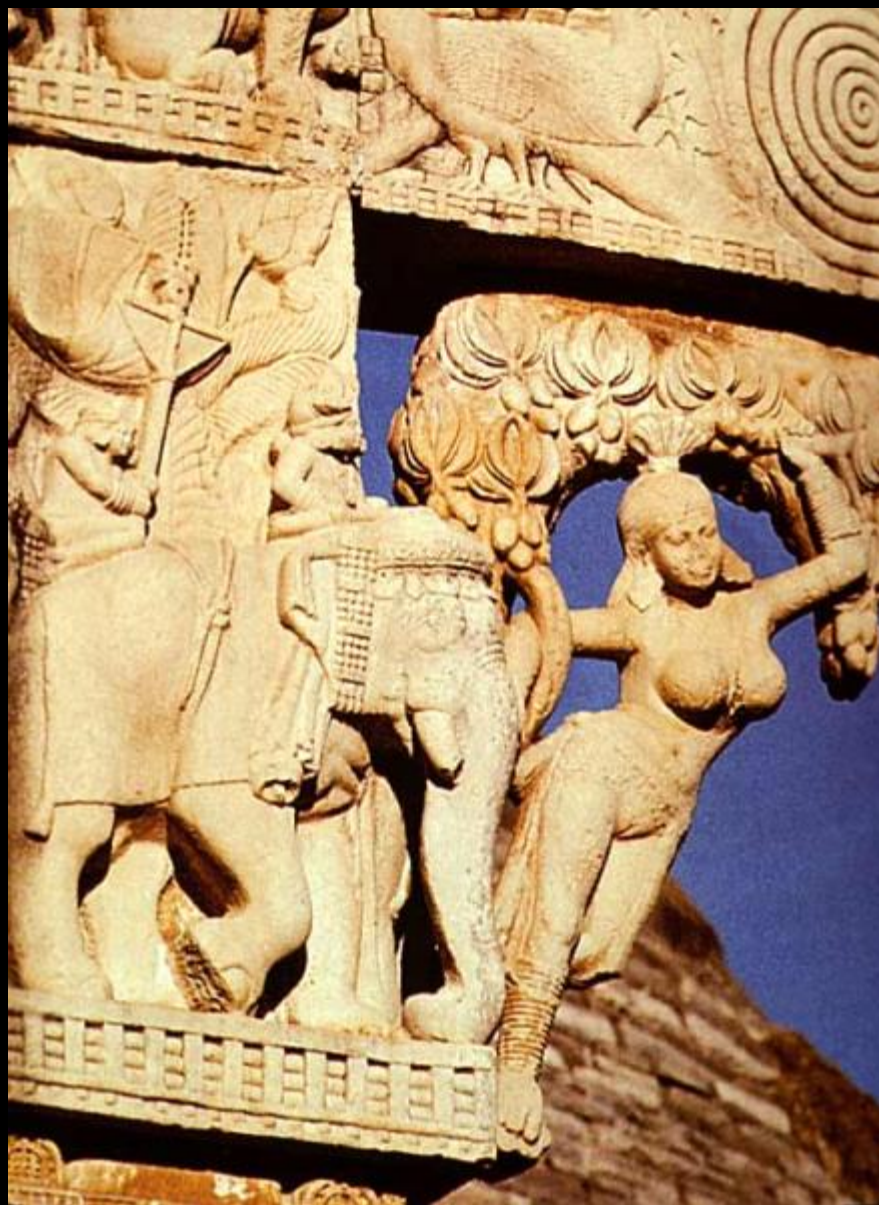
Buddha as empty throne:  
1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE images



Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh, India, *Great Stupa*, 3<sup>rd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE



Sanchi, Yakshi bracket figure from *Great Stupa*



Gandhara, *The Dream of Maya*, 2nd-3rd c.



Gandhara, *Prince Siddhartha Gautama*,  
2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.



Gandharan Buddha as ascetic,  
2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.



# Buddha under the bodhi tree



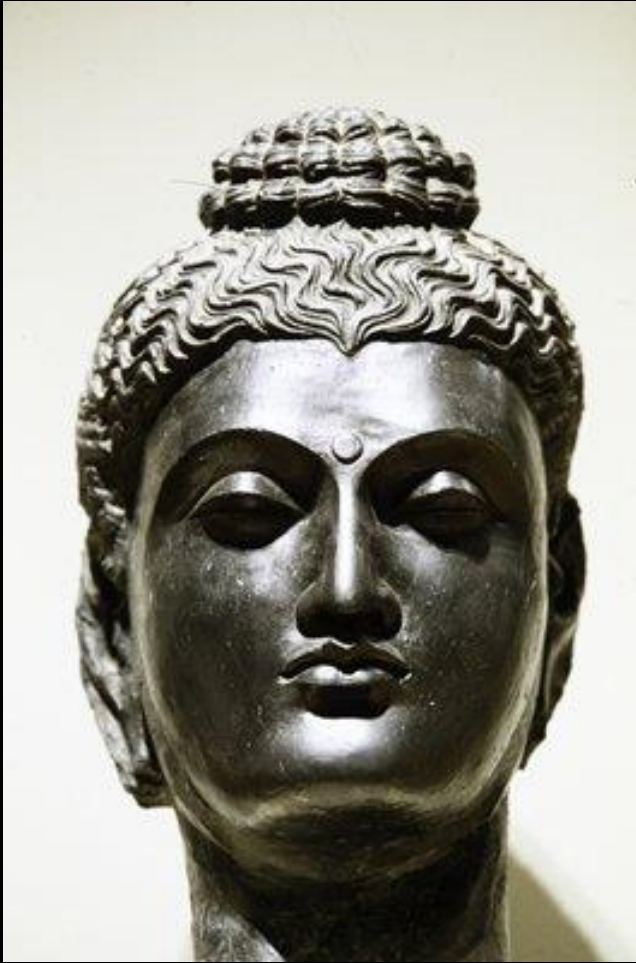
Afghanistan (Gandhara), *Standing Buddha*, 3<sup>rd</sup> c., 2001.153







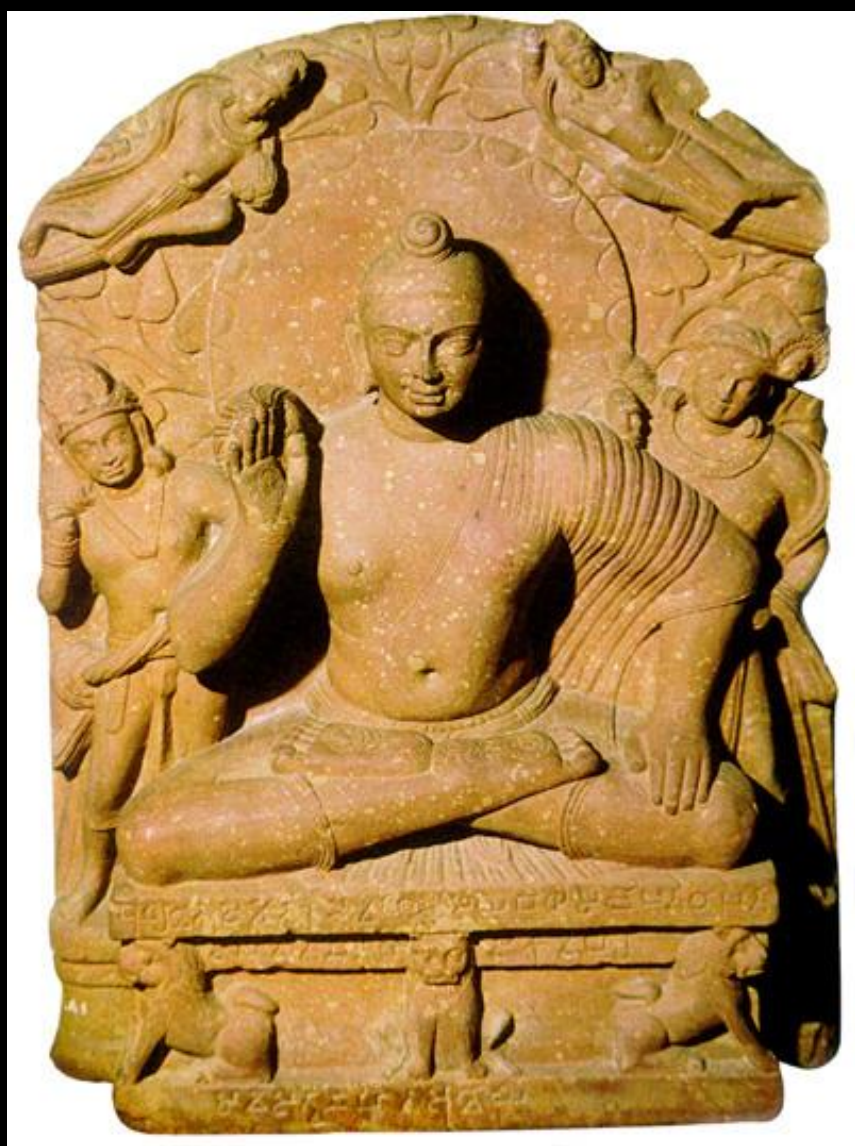
Gandhara, *Head of Buddha*,  
2<sup>nd</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> c., 57.44



Greece, *Head of Aphrodite*,  
3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE, 32.15



Mathura, *Buddha and Attendants*,  
1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c., red sandstone



Mathura, India, *Standing Buddha*,  
5<sup>th</sup> c., mottled red sandstone



India, Sarnath style,  
*Standing Buddha*, 5<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> c.



Sarnath, *Seated Buddha Preaching  
First Sermon*, 5<sup>th</sup> c., sandstone



Thailand, *Seated Buddha*,  
10<sup>th</sup> c., 69.86.2



China, *Standing Buddha*,  
limestone, late 6<sup>th</sup> c., 2000.207



China, *Bodhisattva pair*, white  
marble, late 6<sup>th</sup> c., 42.4.1-2



China, *Seated Kuan-yin*,  
wood, pigments, and gold,  
11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c., 98.62a-h



# Spread of Buddhism from India





# Jainism: Origins and Ideas

- Mahavira gave up his earthly possessions and practiced severe austerities as an ascetic to attain enlightenment.
- Through a life of ascetism, Jain monks attain *kaivala*, which is release from endless cycle of birth/death/rebirth.
- *Tirthankaras* (“pathfinders”) help others find the path to enlightenment; also called *Jinas* (“victors”).
- Some gods and goddesses are drawn from ancient pool of local deities.

# INDIA

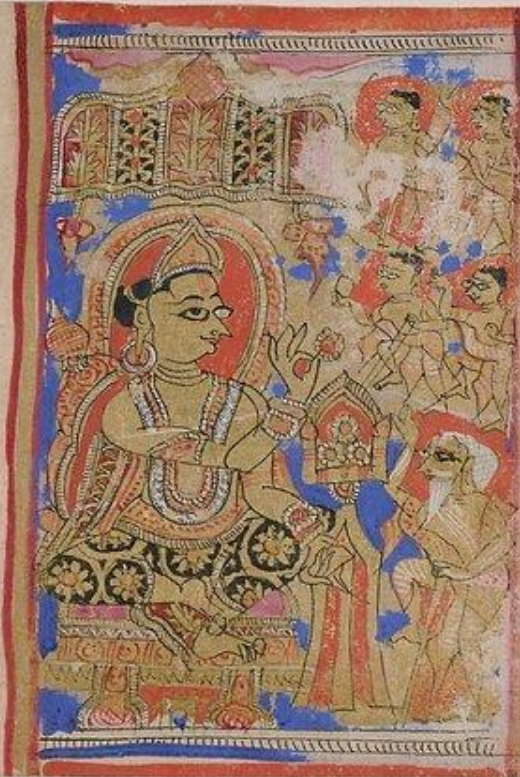
## States and Union Territories



# Jain Art and Culture

- Images of Mahavira are a symbol of perfection pointing toward a spiritual goal.
- “Sky clad” monks have renounced the needs of the world and their bodies; they are vulnerable to the forces of nature, but ignore them.
- Profuse decoration of Jain temples represent the rich inner life of the soul and great complexity of the theology.

Gujarat region, *Mahavira Gives Away all his Possessions*,  
about 1500, watercolor and gold on paper, 90.29.4



॥ आता एव विना कथं हि रणदि च्या र्था धा यत्र च वाच्यं ॥

वीर ललां अणुत्तरां आह  
साणां अणुणा निरकसा  
इ ॥ विद्यादिशसं  
सि ॥ वाधणं विचार  
रं ॥ वलं वाहणं ॥ क  
विद्यापूरं विद्या अंतवर्गं वि  
वाधणकणारथणमणित

स ईशकवा विद्यादी विचारः तादवच विगा यत्र कावादा  
खिरवादिनि ॥



*Seated Jina, 1108, burnished black stone, 98.211*



*shrivatsa*



Karnataka, *Ascetic Gommata*, 10<sup>th</sup> c.,  
basalt, 60' h



*Standing Jina*, 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> c., bronze, 98.246



Ranakpur, *Adinath Temple*, 15<sup>th</sup> c.





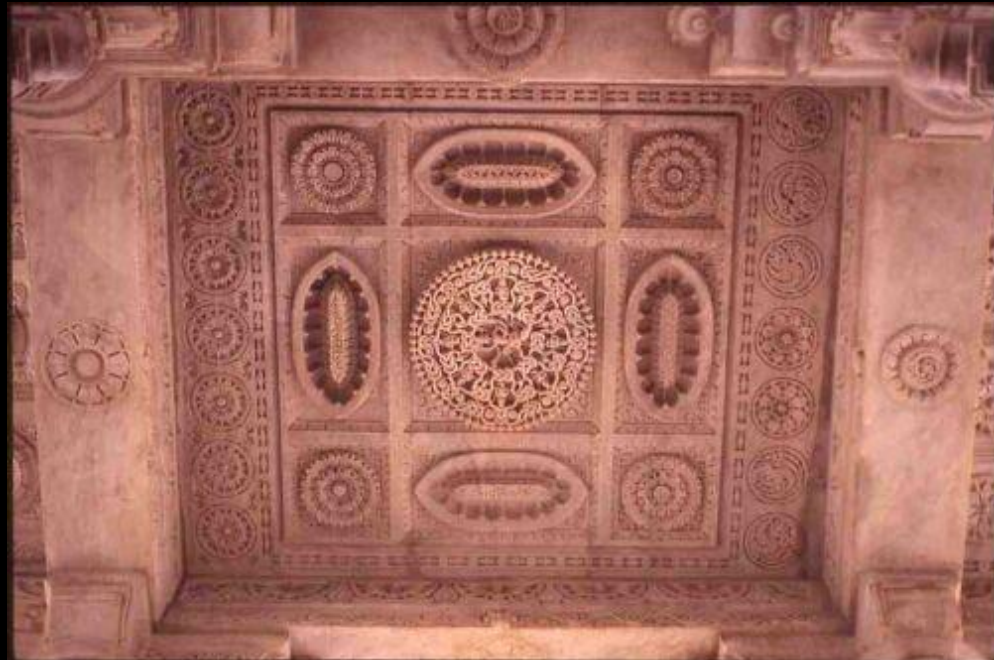


Mumbai, *Jain Temple*  
(detail with yakshis)





Ranakpur, *Adinath Temple*,  
marble ceiling details, 15<sup>th</sup> c.



# Hinduism: Origins and Ideas

- Emerges out of mingled Vedic culture and indigenous beliefs; deities are associated with forces of nature
- Social class/caste system sanctioned by Hinduism
- First images appear in 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE; by 6<sup>th</sup> c. CE imagery is well established
- Each sect considers its deity to be supreme
- Brahmins (priests) perform rituals of the faith to help release practitioners from *samsara* and achieve *moksha*
- Artists create rich imagery based on Hindu/Vedic literature

# Hindu Art and Culture

- Art is profusely **ornamental, textural, and colorful**. Reflects the abundance and favor of the gods through repetition and reduplication of elements.
- **Symbolism** is pervasive. Forms and images used were prescribed by ancient religious texts, as were the ritual practices in which the images are used.
- The arts depict a world filled with **divine dynamism**: forms are tactile, sensuous, and radiant. This is the way artists show the divine nature.
- **Visualization of the god** is central to understanding.



*Cave-Temple of Shiva,*  
Elephanta Island, mid-6<sup>th</sup> c.

linga shrine





# INDIA

## States and Union Territories





Khajuraho, *Kandarya Mahadeva Temple*, c. 1000





Madhya Pradesh, *Shiva's Family*,  
about 1000, 97.36





Indonesia, *Ganesha*, 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> c.,  
volcanic stone, 2003.198







Tamil Nadu, *Shiva Nataraja*,  
about 1100, 20.2













Tamil Nadu, *Devi as Uma*  
(*Parvati*), 14<sup>th</sup> c., 2009.12.1



Nepal, Goddess Durga, 13<sup>th</sup> c.



West Bengal or Bangladesh,  
*Vishnu with Lakshmi and  
Sarasvati*, about 1100, 90.67





Lakshmi



Sarasvati



Garuda



The Buddha and Kalki



# Hindu home altar and street shrine





# Hindu Pilgrimage to Ganges River



Karnataka, *Brihadesvara Temple*, c.1525



# Public Processional Worship

