

# Glossary

<b>ahimsa</b>	nonviolence; a code that specifies “no harm” to living beings, practiced mainly by Jains
<b>Akshobhya</b>	one of the five cosmic Buddhas; he rules the eastern paradise and symbolizes the will to enlightenment
<b>argillite</b>	a compact rock of hardened clay cemented with silica
<b>Amoghasiddhi</b>	one of the five cosmic Buddhas; he rules the northern paradise
<b>Avalokiteshvara</b>	a bodhisattva who is the embodiment of compassion and sometimes of enlightenment itself and, after about the sixth century, the most popular bodhisattva in Buddhism
<b>avatar</b>	the incarnation or “descent” of a deity on earth; especially of Vishnu
<b><i>Bhagavata Purana</i></b>	“Ancient Stories of the Lord”; featuring the exploits of the Hindu god Vishnu, Book 10, which focuses on Vishnu’s manifestation as the god Krishna, is the most popular portion of this classic, and incidents in it are often depicted in Indian painting
<b>bhakti</b>	a doctrine of faith in which, through loyal love to a god, the devotee becomes one with the deity
<b>bodhisattva</b>	an “enlightened being”; a person who guides others down the Buddhist path and who has the potential to attain Buddhahood
<b>Brahma</b>	the Hindu god of creation; he has four heads, one to look in each direction; Brahma is included, along with Shiva and Vishnu, in the Hindu triad, but never had a large following
<b>Brahman</b>	the “Supreme Being”; in Hinduism, the source of reality from which all being and knowing come
<b>Brahmin</b>	the priestly class or a member of the priestly class of Vedism and Hinduism, charged with the duties of learning, teaching, and performing rites and sacrifices
<b>Buddha (buddha)</b>	an omnipresent, enlightened being; the term may refer to mortals or those of abstract theoretical realms
<b>chakra</b>	a discus or wheel; sometimes a solar symbol; in Buddhism, the chakra is the wheel of law, sometimes referred to in Buddha’s first sermon, in which he put the wheel of the law into motion; in Hinduism, the chakra is an attribute and weapon of Vishnu
<b>Chakravartin</b>	the ideal, universal monarch

<b>Chamunda</b>	Hindu goddess who represents a destructive aspect of the Great Goddess
<b>chasing</b>	creating indented designs in a metal surface, working on the front surface (as opposed to repoussé) and using either metal tools or punches
<b>circumambulation</b>	walking around—i.e., a temple or stupa—in a proscribed manner to gain merit
<b>damaru</b>	a drum used by dancers consisting of two triangular forms joined at the apexes; when held by a deity, it can represent the rhythm of time and creative energy; the two joined sections may also be an allusion to male and female principals
<b>darshan</b>	the auspicious sight of a deity, sacred place, image, or revered person; sight
<b>Devi (devi)</b>	the Great Goddess who, with Shiva and Vishnu, is one of the three most widely worshipped deities in South Asia; she is manifest in many forms, sometimes as the consorts of the great gods
<b>dharma</b>	in Buddhism, dharma is considered the moral basis of religion; in Hinduism, the term refers especially to duty performed for its own sake, without thought of compensation
<b>dhoti</b>	a long rectangular garment worn over the lower portion of the body, wrapped around the waist, passed between the legs, and tucked at the base of the back
<b>distemper</b>	a warm glue binder added to powdered pigments to produce a liquid paint; it was used in Nepal and Tibet
<b>Durga</b>	a militant form of Devi, the supreme goddess in Hinduism
<b>engraving</b>	making an incised design in metal with a sharp tool
<b>Ganesha</b>	the god who removes obstacles; the son of Parvati and by extension, Shiva, elephant-headed Ganesha is called upon at the beginning of any venture, including worship
<b>Ganga</b>	the goddess who is the personification of the sacred Ganges River, located in North India; she is the daughter of the Himalayas and the sister of Parvati; her symbol and mount is the makara
<b>Garuda</b>	an ancient celestial creature, part-human part-bird, linked with the sun and air; he is the vehicle of Vishnu
<b>granulation</b>	gold surface designs created by the addition of tiny gold balls which are adhered to the surface with a mixture of glue and salt of copper such as ground malachite

<b>Great Departure</b>	refers to Prince Siddhartha (later the Buddha) leaving his palace to seek truth and enlightenment
<b>guru</b>	the Sanskrit word for a religious guide; spiritual teacher
<b>Hanuman</b>	the monkey god, faithful servant of Rama; he helped Rama free Sita from captivity in Lanka
<b>Jatakas</b>	folk tales about the Buddha's past lives
<b>jina</b>	someone who has reached a pinnacle of knowledge; in Jainism, a tirthankara
<b>Kali</b>	a horrific form of Parvati, hence a manifestation of Devi; a goddess who is both creator and destroyer of life
<b>karma</b>	the law of cause and effect, which pertains to consequences of one's deeds not only in this life but in future lives
<b>kinnara</b>	or kinnari: a part-bird part-human creature
<b>Krishna</b>	the ancient cowherd god and hero of India, playful lover of milkmaids; he is an avatar of Vishnu
<b>lakshana</b>	auspicious physical mark on a Buddha or bodhisattva indicating an advanced spiritual state; Buddha Shakyamuni has thirty-two major lakshanas, including the urna, ushnisha, and webbed fingers
<b>Lakshmi</b>	also known as goddess of good fortune and wealth; she is considered to be the main consort of Vishnu
<b>lalitasana</b>	a posture of relaxation: the left leg (usually) is folded on the seat while the right hangs down, sometimes resting on a pedestal or stool
<b>lama</b>	the Tibetan word for teacher
<b>linga</b>	the phallic emblem of Shiva, usually found in the innermost sanctum of his temples
<b>lost-wax casting</b>	<i>see description of the technique on pages 45–46</i>
<b>Mahabharata</b>	the great ancient Indian epic, including the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> (Song of the Lord Krishna) and Krishna's philosophical instructions, which are key to Hindu thought; an oral tradition until written down in the fourth century B.C.
<b>Maheshvara</b>	"Great Lord"; an epithet of Shiva
<b>Mahisha</b>	a powerful demon slain by the goddess Durga
<b>Maitreya</b>	the Buddha of the Future, Maitreya will preside over an earthly paradise

<b>makara</b>	a mythological crocodile-like creature, an auspicious symbol of life-giving waters and the primal energy of life
<b>mandala</b>	an assembly of deities often shown within a schematic diagram in the form of a palace
<b>mantra</b>	a sacred utterance or prayer with magic power
<b>Mara</b>	an evil being, symbol of death and destruction, whose powerful armies and seductive daughters failed to tempt Siddhartha (the future Buddha) on his path toward enlightenment
<b>maya</b>	In Buddhism, the illusory nature of the world perceived as reality—that is, the mistaken perception that the world is permanent when it is actually <i>samsara</i>
<b>mercury gilding</b>	<i>see description of the technique on page 46</i>
<b>moksha</b>	“release” or “liberation”; the religious goal of Hindus, whereby the individual attains a state of oneness with the Universal
<b>mudra</b>	a gesture made with one or both hands to convey a particular meaning
<b>naga/nagini</b>	a male or female snake, generally a cobra; also, a class of ancient Indian serpent deities associated with water and therefore fertility; they were later appropriated as guardians by the great Indic religions; sometimes a serpent king or queen
<b>Nandin</b>	the bull vehicle of Shiva
<b>Nataraja</b>	a dance posture assumed by Shiva in his cosmic dance of creation and destruction
<b>nirvana</b>	the goal toward which Buddhists strive: the annihilation of the self, the attainment of perfect knowledge and integration with the Universal
<b>Parvati</b>	“daughter of the mountain”; a form of Devi, she is Shiva’s principal consort; her variant forms include Kali and Uma
<b>prana</b>	the sacred breath of life
<b>puja</b>	ritualistic acts performed to honor or worship a divinity, including offerings of food, flowers, water, and incense
<b>Puranas</b>	ancient literature about the Hindu gods
<b>raja</b>	“king”
<b>Rajput</b>	“The sons of Kings”; the Hindu kings and their clansmen in Rajasthan

<b>Rama</b>	the virtuous king and hero of the epic <i>Ramayana</i> , an avatar of Vishnu, and honored and revered in his own right as the ideal ruler; husband of Sita, the faithful wife
<b><i>Ramayana</i></b>	the story of prince Rama, one of the two ancient epics of India
<b>repoussé</b>	pressing designs into the back side of metal that has been laid on a yielding surface
<b>sacred thread</b>	a long circular cord worn over one shoulder and across the chest and back; a sign of learning and adulthood traditionally worn by the three upper castes as well as by deities
<b>samabhanga</b>	a posture in which the weight of the body is distributed equally on both sides
<b>sampot</b>	a Southeast Asian wraparound garment half of which is drawn between the legs from the front and fastened behind at the waist; the other half falls from the waist down the front in pleated folds
<b>samsara</b>	transmigration; the continuous cycle of death and rebirth undergone by living beings; a basic concept in Indic religions
<b>Sarasvati</b>	goddess of learning, the arts, and wisdom; consort of Vishnu
<b>Shakti</b>	in Hinduism, the feminine creative force or its presentation
<b>Shakyamuni</b>	the clan ruled by Siddhartha Gautama's father; when Siddhartha became enlightened, he was sometimes referred to as the Buddha Shakyamuni
<b>Shiva</b>	one of the principal Hindu gods; the god of destruction and creation who appears in many forms, both peaceful and angry; his vehicle is the bull Nandin and his most common attribute is the trident
<b>Siddhartha</b>	also Siddhartha Gautama: the princely name of Buddha; his name before his enlightenment
<b>Skanda</b>	the god of war, son of Shiva and Parvati
<b>srivatsa</b>	an auspicious mark
<b>stupa</b>	in Buddhism and Jainism, an architectural term for the dome-shaped structure that contains the relic of a Buddha or other revered individual; may be made in smaller votive forms
<b>syncretic</b>	an adjective describing the coming together or combining of different deities or beliefs
<b>tirthankara</b>	"Crosser of the Ford"; in Jainism, one who has attained perfect knowledge; there have been twenty-four such beings in the Jain present time-cycle, Mahavira (ca. 540–468 B.C.) being the most recent

<b>tribhanga</b>	the “thrice-bent” standing posture in which the tilt of the head, chest, and lower body are opposed
<b>Upanishads</b>	a body of ancient Indic religious texts; speculations upon the four “collections” of sacred hymns in the Vedas
<b>urna</b>	an auspicious mark manifested by a whorl of hair, a circle, or a protuberance between the eyebrows; it is one of the signs of the Buddha and is also characteristic of other exalted beings
<b>ushnisha</b>	a cranial protuberance on Buddhist figures symbolizing transcendental knowledge
<b>vajra</b>	double-headed thunderbolt originally held by the god Indra but later carried by several fierce Hindu and Buddhist deities
<b>Vedas</b>	ancient texts sacred to Hinduism; veda means “wisdom” or “knowing”
<b>vina</b>	an ancient Indian musical instrument, usually with four strings on a long fingerboard, with a gourd resonator at each end
<b>Vishnu</b>	“the Preserver,” one of the most important and widely worshipped deities in India
<b>yaksha/yakshi</b>	a male or female nature spirit; deity of wealth and guardian of treasure, especially associated with trees, pools, and vegetation
<b>Yamuna</b>	a goddess who personifies the Yamuna River, a sacred waterway on the subcontinent
<b>yoga</b>	physical exercises by which an individual attempts to “yoke” him- or herself to the Universal; yogic practices are used by most Indic religions; practitioners of yoga are called yogis
<b>yoni</b>	the pedestal supporting the linga in a Shaivite temple; a symbol of the female principle in creation; with the linga, represents the unity within duality that is central to Hindu thought

# Pronunciation Guide

Avalokiteshvara (Avah-lo-kee-**TESH**-varah)  
bodhisattva (bo-dee-**SAHT**-vah)  
Buddha Shakyamuni (BOO-dah **SHAHK**-yah-moo-nee)  
Bhagavad Gita (Bhah-gah-vahd **GEET**-tah)  
Chamunda (Chah-**MUN**-dah)  
Devi (**DAY**-vee)  
Durga (**DUR**-gah)  
Ganga (**GAHN**-gah)  
Ganesha (Gah-**NESH**-ah)  
Garuda (**GAH**-roo-dah)  
Gupta (**GUP**-tah)  
Lakshmi (**LAHK**-shmee)  
Ikshvaku (Eesh-**VAH**-koo)  
Jainism (**JAYN**-ism)  
Jataka (**JAH**-tah-kah)  
Kushan (**KOO**-shahn)  
Mahabharata (**MAH**-hah-bar-**AH**-tah)  
Mahavira (**MAH**-hah-veer-ah)  
Maitreya (**MY**-tray-ah)  
Mathura (**MAH**-tur-rah)  
Mauryas (**MORE**-ee-yahs)  
maya (**MY**-ah)  
moksha (**MOK**-shah)  
Mughal (**MO**-gull)  
Nataraja (**NAH**-tah-**RAH**-ja)  
nirvana (**NEER**-vah-nah)  
prana (**PRAH**-nah)  
Pagan (**PAH**-gahn)  
puja (**POOH**-jah)  
Rama (**RAH**-mah)  
Ramayana (**RAH**-mah-**YAH**-nah)  
ragamala (**RAH**-gah-**MAH**-la)

**Sarasvati** (Sah-**RAHS**-vah-tee)

**Shiva** (**SHE**-vah)

**Siddhartha Gautama** (Sid-**DAR**-thah Gow-**TAH**-mah)

**stupa** (**STOO**-pah)

**tirthankara** (**TEER**-thahn-kah-rah)

**Upanishads** (Oo-**PAHN**-ee-shahds)

**ushnisha** (oosh-**NEE**-shah)

**Vedas** (**VAY**-dahs)

**Vishnu** (**VISH**-noo)