

WCMA Indian Art Module

Indian Module Glossary

Chauri: a fly whisk, often associated with religious rituals in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh religions in which the whisk suggested the idea of whisking away the troubles and worries of earthly life.

Courtier: a companion and advisor to a king or queen.

Darbar: the emperor's court or council.

Deity: a god; a supernatural or spiritual being.

Dharma: the divine rule of virtue, righteousness, and duty. In Hinduism, dharma refers to one's personal obligations, duty, and calling. In Buddhism, it means following the teachings and principles of the Buddha.

Dhoti: a traditional Indian garment worn by men; the cloth is wrapped around the hips and legs and tied at the waist.

Ganjifa: a game played with circular cards that originated in Persia and became popular in India during the 16th century.

Garuda: a Hindu and Buddhist religious figure that is half man and half bird. Wearing a Garuda amulet is believed to provide protection from snake bites.

Hinduism: the world's third largest religion and the most common religion in India. Hinduism consists of a set of traditions and beliefs that have evolved over a long period of time. There are different sects within Hinduism, but belief in the cycle of reincarnation and reference to the Hindu texts called the Vedas are central to all. Hindus believe in Brahman, the absolute and infinite universal soul or cosmic force, which is believed to be present in the soul of each individual. Brahman's attributes have been personified in the form of deities such as Shiva and Vishnu to make them more accessible to the human mind.

Islam: A religion founded by the prophet Mohammed, whose followers believe in one God, *Allah* in Arabic. Believers worship God by following the Five Pillars of Islam: Belief, Worship, Fasting, Almsgiving, and Pilgrimage. The Islamic religious text the Koran, *Qur'an* in Arabic, describes God's revelations to Mohammed. Muslims accept the texts of the Jewish Torah and Christian Gospels as earlier revelations of God's word. Islam first reached the northern regions of India in the 8th century CE and was introduced in other regions under the reign of the Mughals in the 16th century. Today Islam is a rapidly growing religion, currently the second largest.

Krishna: an earthly manifestation or form of the Hindu god Vishnu; a central deity in Hinduism.

Lakshmi: the Hindu goddess of health, beauty, and prosperity.

Manuscript: a hand-written text, often featuring decoration or illustration.

Mughal: an empire that controlled northern India for most of the 16th–mid18th centuries. Akbar and Shah Jahan were both Mughal rulers. The Mughals were descended from the Timurids, a Muslim dynasty descended from the Mongol imperial leader Timur (often known in English as Tamerlane). Mughal is also sometimes spelled *Moghul* in English. In the 18th century, British colonial powers took control of India from the Mughals.

Muslim: a follower of the Islamic religion.

Patron: a person who provides financial support to an artist.

Persian style: The Persian style is characterized by the strong use of line, intricate patterning, and careful attention to detail. The influence of art from Persia (known today as Iran) can be seen in several of the Indian paintings in this module.

Raga/Ragini: an Indian musical form. *Ragas* provide musicians with a sort of formula of keys and notes that embody the personality of the *raga* and allow the individual performer to compose and improvise a performance. As such, ragas can evolve over time as different artists play them, but they often have associations with a particular mood, emotion, time of day, or season. A classification system evolved, with some designated as *ragas* (husbands), and others as *ragini* (wives), *ragaputra* (sons), and *bharya* (daughters-in-law), although they are all simply called *ragas* in modern practice. Many Indian painters have been inspired to give visual form to these musical compositions.

Shah: a Persian word for ruler.

Shiva: the four-armed Hindu god believed to periodically destroy the universe so that it could be recreated.

Silk Road: a series of trade routes that crossed Eurasia for approximately 1500 years, facilitating an exchange of goods, artwork, ideas, and innovations.

Vedas: Hindu holy texts.

Vishnu: the Hindu deity believed to balance the powers of good and evil and periodically restore equilibrium during the universe's endless cycle of creation and destruction. Vishnu is known as the preserver of the universe and is considered to exist beyond or outside of time.