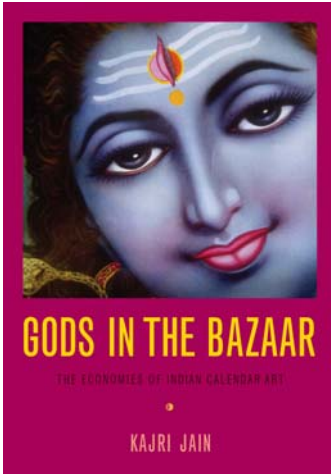


Gods in the Bazaar: The Economies of Indian Calendar Art / Kajri Jain.--(Objects/histories).-- Durham, NC: Duke University Press, April 2007.--448 p.: ill.--ISBN 978-0-8223-3926-7 (pa., alk. paper): \$29.95.



Lithographs were one of the first mass-produced Indian commodities and they place the printing industry squarely at the birth of Indian nationalism. Primarily centered in the southern city of Sivakasi, most printing firms were family-owned. This native base enabled the calendar industry to successfully operate across religious, social, and linguistic communities, paralleling the way that British colonial rule encouraged a common national identity.

Gods in the Bazaar is an investigation of the development and socio-cultural impact of calendar and “framing” images. Author Kajri Jain, assistant professor, Departments of Film Studies and Visual Arts, University of Western Ontario, persuasively argues that the modern and commercial forms of mythological and religious images used in calendar art helped mold visual representations of the Indian identity. Somewhat paradoxically, she desires to elevate calendar art beyond its post-colonial and non-Western context to fine art, while simultaneously approaching the subject anthropologically through her own experiences, field interviews and snapshot photography. Amply illustrated in both full-color and black-and-

white images, she uses a combination of her own photographs taken *in situ* alongside reproductions of artwork.

Clearly an academic text, this volume is not a casual read. Jain's style is complex, laced with academic jargon that often requires re-reading for complete comprehension. She breaks her seven chapters into three parts. “Genealogy” traces the development of the Indian printing industry in its commercial contexts. “Economy” addresses the aesthetics and values associated with the use of sacred iconography in post-independence India. The final section, “Efficacy,” analyzes the modern Indian use of calendar art and religious imagery for political gains. Jain investigates how such appropriations by an increasingly secular society manifest differences between what these images appear to be saying, their meanings, and their real effect in the globalized public sphere. The bibliography and index are extensive, and the notes section spans an informative 30 pages.

Gods in the Bazaar is a landmark publication on Indian calendar art, despite its occasionally dense tone. This volume is an essential element of a scholarly Indian or South Asian visual culture collection, though it is not a crucial purchase for public libraries or more general art history collections. It will complement works on Indian photography and printed images by Christopher Pinney and the socio-cultural writings of Patricia Uberoi.

Dan Lipcan, Senior Library Associate, Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, daniel.lipcan@metmuseum.org

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