



Smithsonian Associates

The Ganges: River and Goddess

Robert DeCaroli

Thursday, May 21, 2026 - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. ET

Key Locations

Gomukh
Gangotri
Devprayag
Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram)
Patna (Pataliputra)
Varanasi (Benares, Kashi)
Sarnath
Prayagraj (Allahabad)
Kolkata (Calcutta)

Names and Terminology

Ganges River (Ganga)
The six headstreams: Alaknanda, Dhauliganga, Nandakini, Pindar, Mandakini and Bhagirathi
Himalayas
Harappan Civilization
Bhagiratha
Pallava Dynasty (5th-8th c.)
Shiva
Naga/Nagini
Nataraja
Bhairava
Mahajanapada
Mauryan Empire (mid-4th to early 2nd c. BCE)
King Ashoka
Ashokan Edicts
Ghats
Kashi Vishvanath Temple
Jyotirlinga
Buddha
“Turning the Wheel of the Law” (Dharmachakra)
Yamuna River
Kumbh Mela
Sadhu
Bhagirathi-Hooghly River
Padma River
Kalighat

Further Reading

Darian, Steven. "The Ganges in Indian Art". *East and West*. Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO). Vol. 23, No. 3/4 (1973) pp.307-325

Dehejia, Vidya. *Indian Art*. Art and Ideas Series. London: Phaidon Press, 1997.

Eck, Diana L. *Banaras: City of Light*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Jain, Jyotindra. "Genesis of Kalighat Painting" in *Kalighat Painting: Images from a Changing World*. Kolkata: Grantha Corporation (2006) pp. 9-15 and additional selections.

Kaimal, Padma. "Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon." *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 81 No. 3. (1999) pp. 390-419.

Rabe, Michael D. *The Great Penance at Mamallapuram: Deciphering a Visual Text*. Chennai, India: Institute of Asian Studies, 2001.