

Appendix 1: Glossary

Agni

The God of Fire who governs the East. He is the son of the Prajapati, whose body is the spatio-temporal cosmos and represented by the Hindu stupa as an altar for sacrifice.

Amitabha

The most commonly used name for the Buddha of Infinite Life and Infinite Light. He created and presides over the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, where anyone can be reborn through completely sincere recitation of His name, particularly at the time of death. He is venerated by all Mahayana schools. In Vietnam, his name became a greeting word among the Buddhist followers.

Anandatandava

The Dance of Bliss. That is the cosmic dance of Shiva that symbolizes the cosmic cycles of creation and destruction, the daily rhythm of birth and death. The overall temper of the image is paradoxical, uniting the inner tranquility and outside activity of Shiva.

Apsara

Celestial girls dancing and complimenting the deities in the heaven; a divine symbol of happiness

Arhat, Arhant

Buddhist saint whose name means that he is venerable, free from mistakes and has attained liberation from the circle of Birth and Death, generally through living a monastic life in accordance with Buddhás teachings.

Avalokitesvara

Lit: The Bodhisattva who contemplates the Sounds of the World, often referred to as "Great Compassion Bodhisattva". This originally male Bodhisattva transformed a female one with the name Guan Yin in China and Quan Âm in Vietnam.

Bodhisattva

Lit: "one whose essence is perfect wisdom". In the Mahayana view, Bodhisattva is anyone who has developed the spirit of Enlightenment and the aspiration to save oneself and all human beings from sufferings.

Brahma

The Supreme God, head of the Hindu trinity including Shiva and Vishnu. The Creator who is continuing to create new realities.

Chakra

Eight-spoke wheel, an emblem of Vishnu.

Devi

The general name for goddess; a principal goddess like Parvati, Lakshmi; consort of a male god.

Dvarapala

The guardians with severe and fearsome appearance at Buddhist temples.

Gajasimha

Lit: "Lion-Elephant", a mount of Shiva Ganesha.

The son of Shiva and Parvati. He is regarded as the Lord of Success and destroyer of evils (vanity, selfishness) and obstacles. He is worshiped as the god of education, knowledge, wisdom and wealth. He is figured with a human body and an elephant head whose trunk plunges into a bowl of sweets to symbolize the quest for knowledge.

Gandharva

The musicians of Indra. They live only on perfumes.

Garuda

Divine bird, the vehicle of Vishnu and the great enemy of the serpent Naga.