

India: A Veneration Nation, Exhibit, UCL Anthropology, June 12, 2012



Curatorial Note

The religious and political effectiveness of Indian images as agents of veneration is in large part due to their ubiquity through mass production and circulation. Images similar to the ones in this exhibit adorn the private and public spaces of Indian cities, towns and villages. From the colonial period onward the effectiveness of these images has been re-created through the ritualistic gestures of the devotee facing a print and the awareness that other citizens also possessed similar images.

When viewing these images we should bear in mind that an academic interest in the production and publication of these images may not be shared by devotees and consumers.

In his book *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* Chris

Pinney states that this attitude reflects peoples' engagement with images as the sources of divine interventions through paradigms like *barkat* or plenitude. Devotees, he argues, are not interested in



what images 'look like', but only in what they can 'do'—the nature and extent of the efficacy that they are capable of conducting. Similarly, we encourage the viewer to appreciate these images both for their sheer visual delight and for what their visuality makes possible through the aesthetic, historical and socio-cultural.

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All artefacts are from the collection of Prof. Christopher Pinney.