

# South Asian Art

A Resource for Classroom Teachers

# Click on an image to explore it further:



Surya, Sun God



Dancing Ganesha



Shiva and Parvati



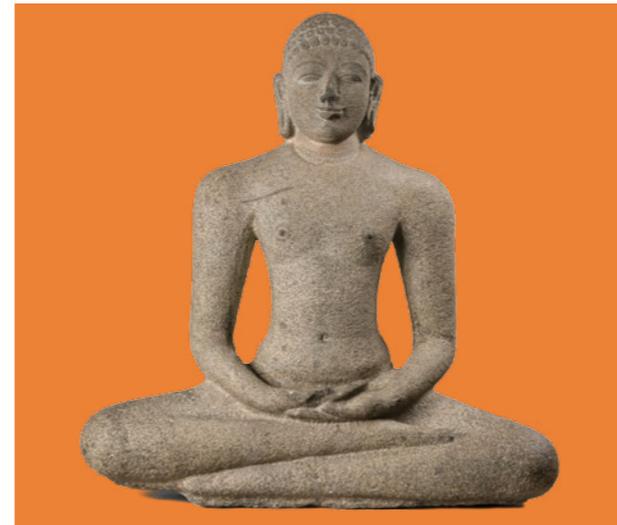
Bridge to Lanka



Krishna Lifts Mount Govardhana



Harinegameshin



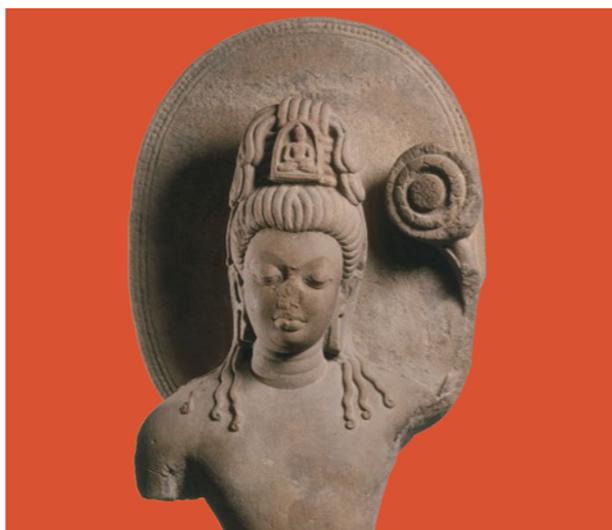
Jina (Jain Savior-Saint)



Qasam al-Abbas



Prince Manohar

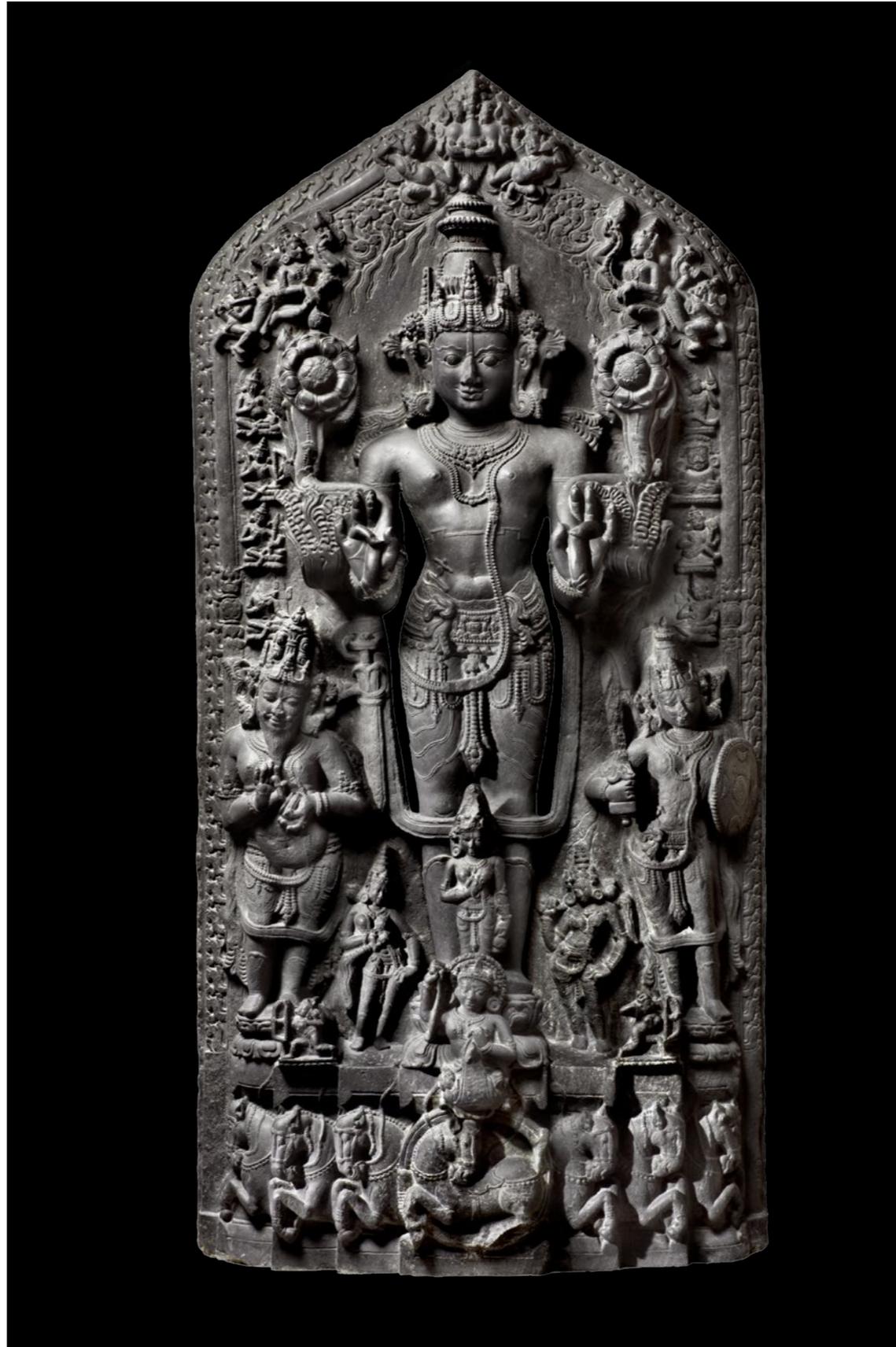


Avalokiteshvara

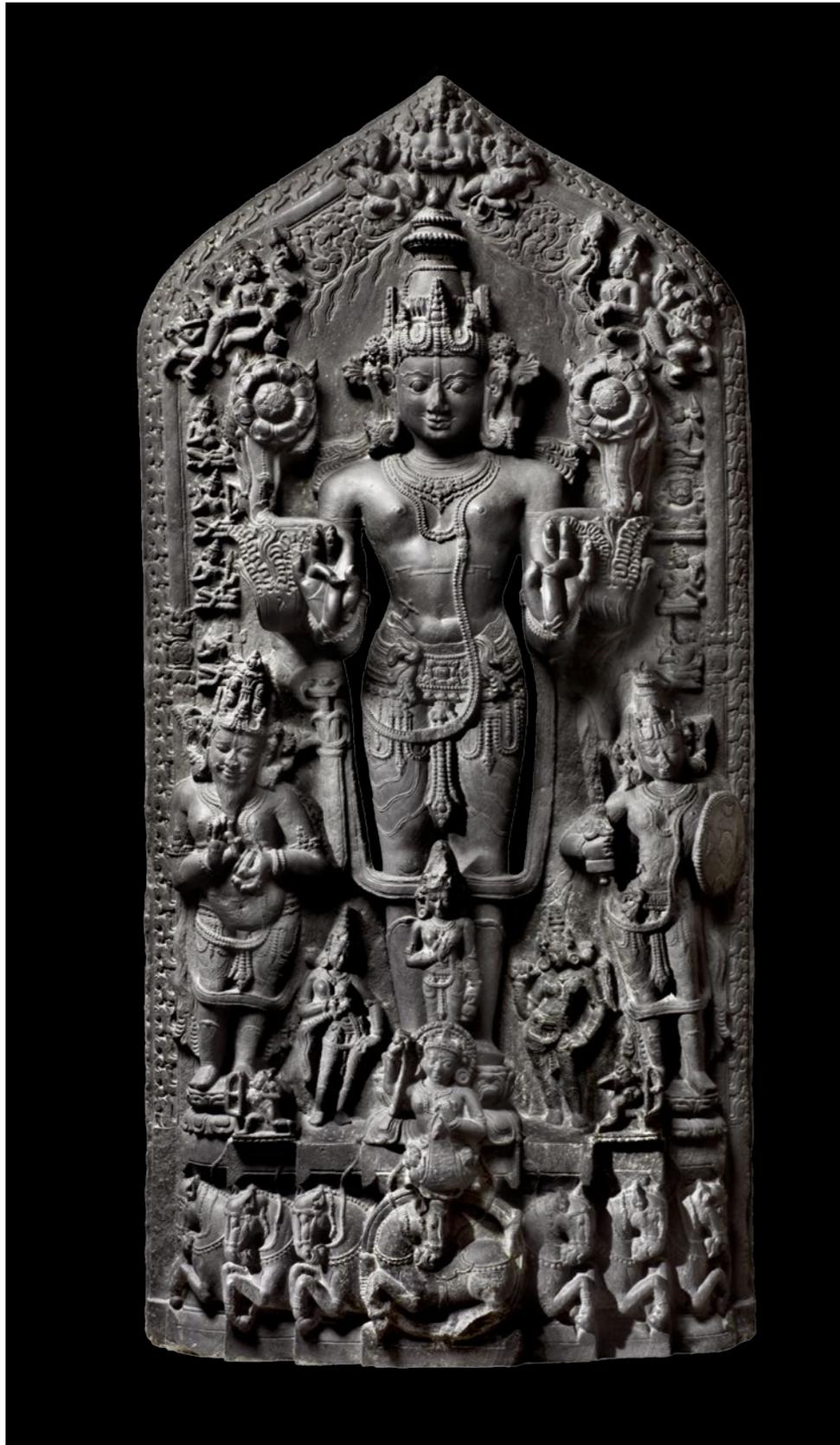


Vajradhara

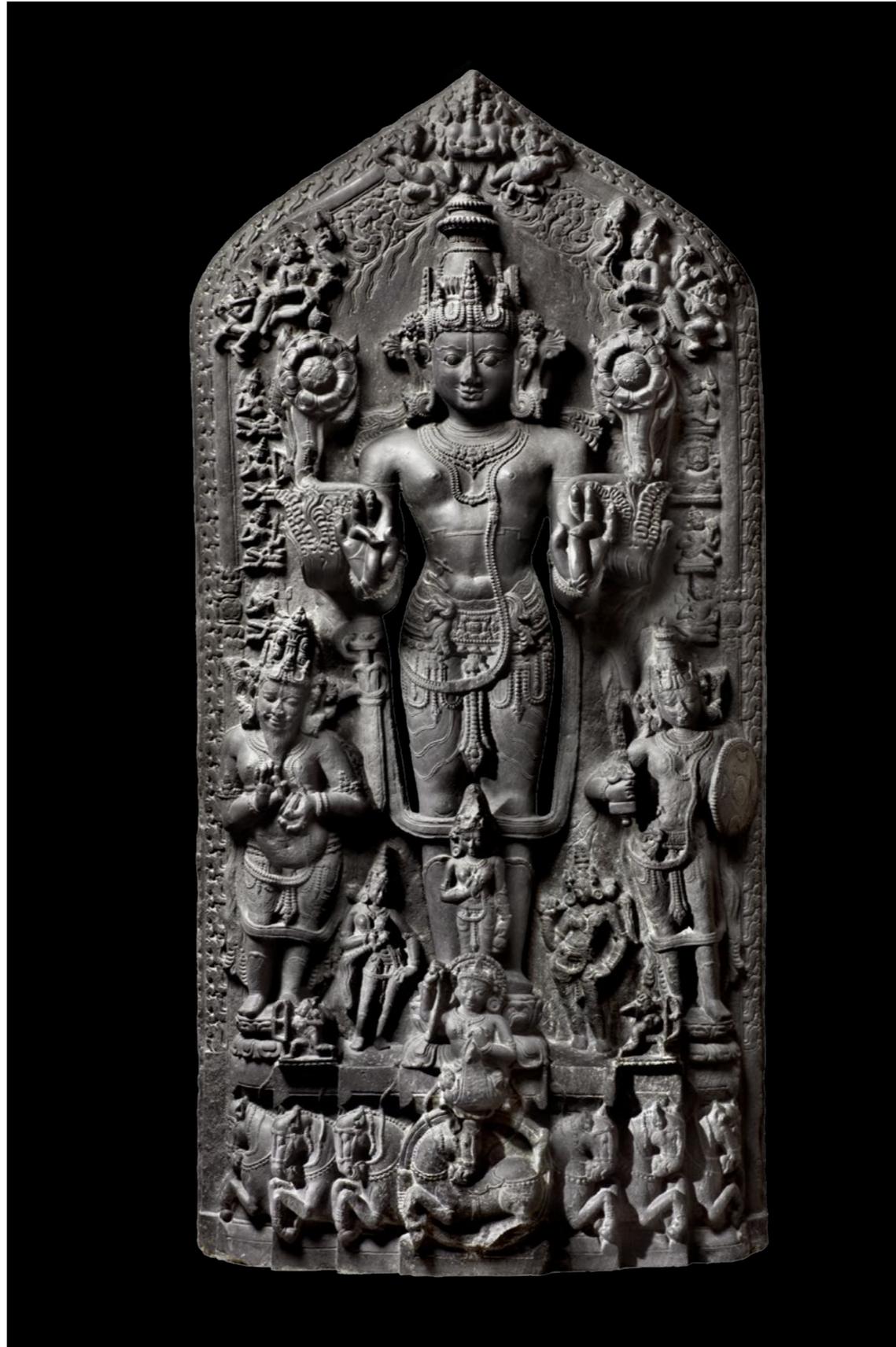
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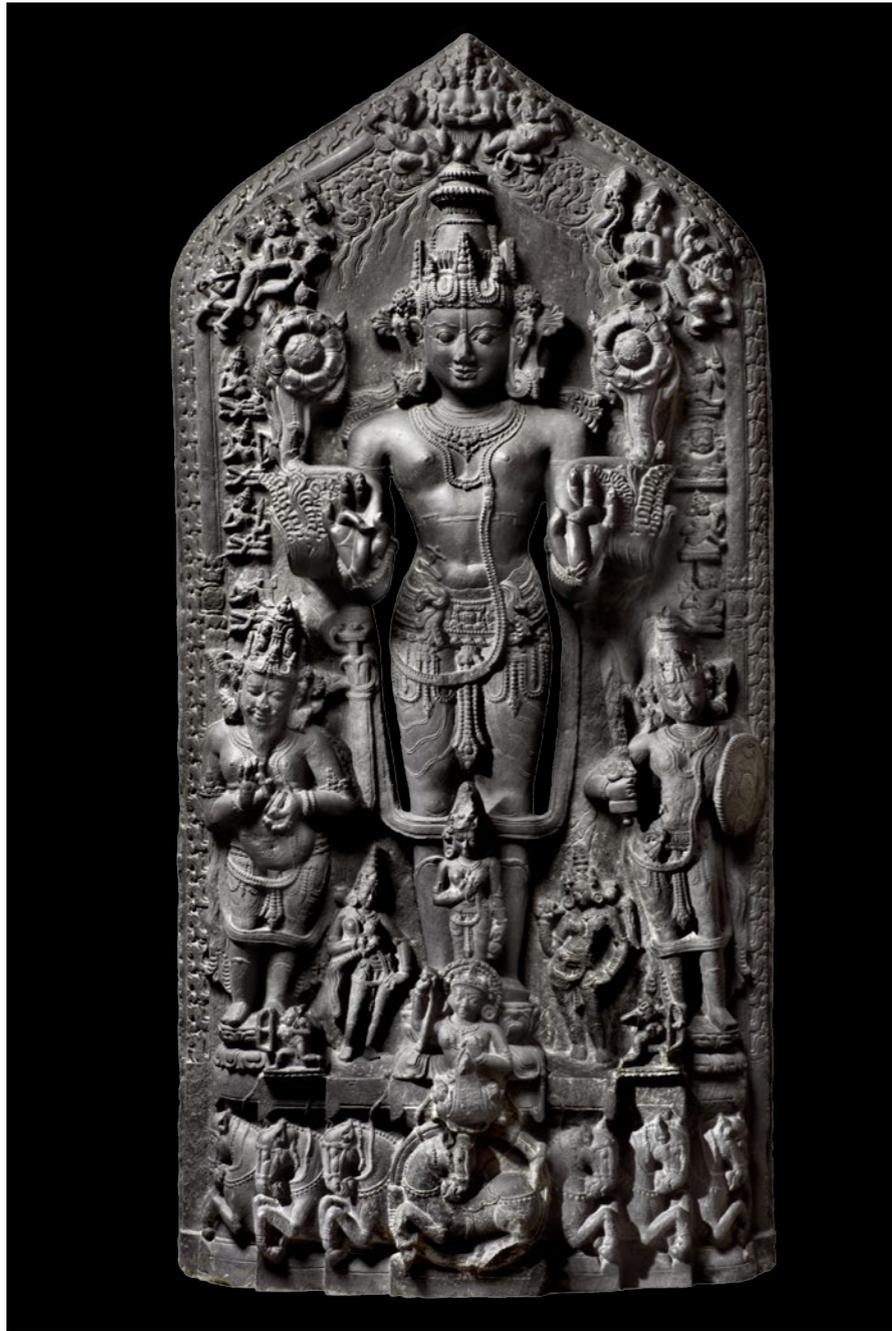
Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



Describe the poses and expressions of all these figures.



What kind of role does the scale of each figure play? Who's most important? Who's next?



Surya, The Sun God



Apollo Driving the Chariot of the Sun

Many cultures have gods that represent the sun. Compare this image of the Greek god Apollo to the sculpture of Surya. How are they similar to and different from each other?

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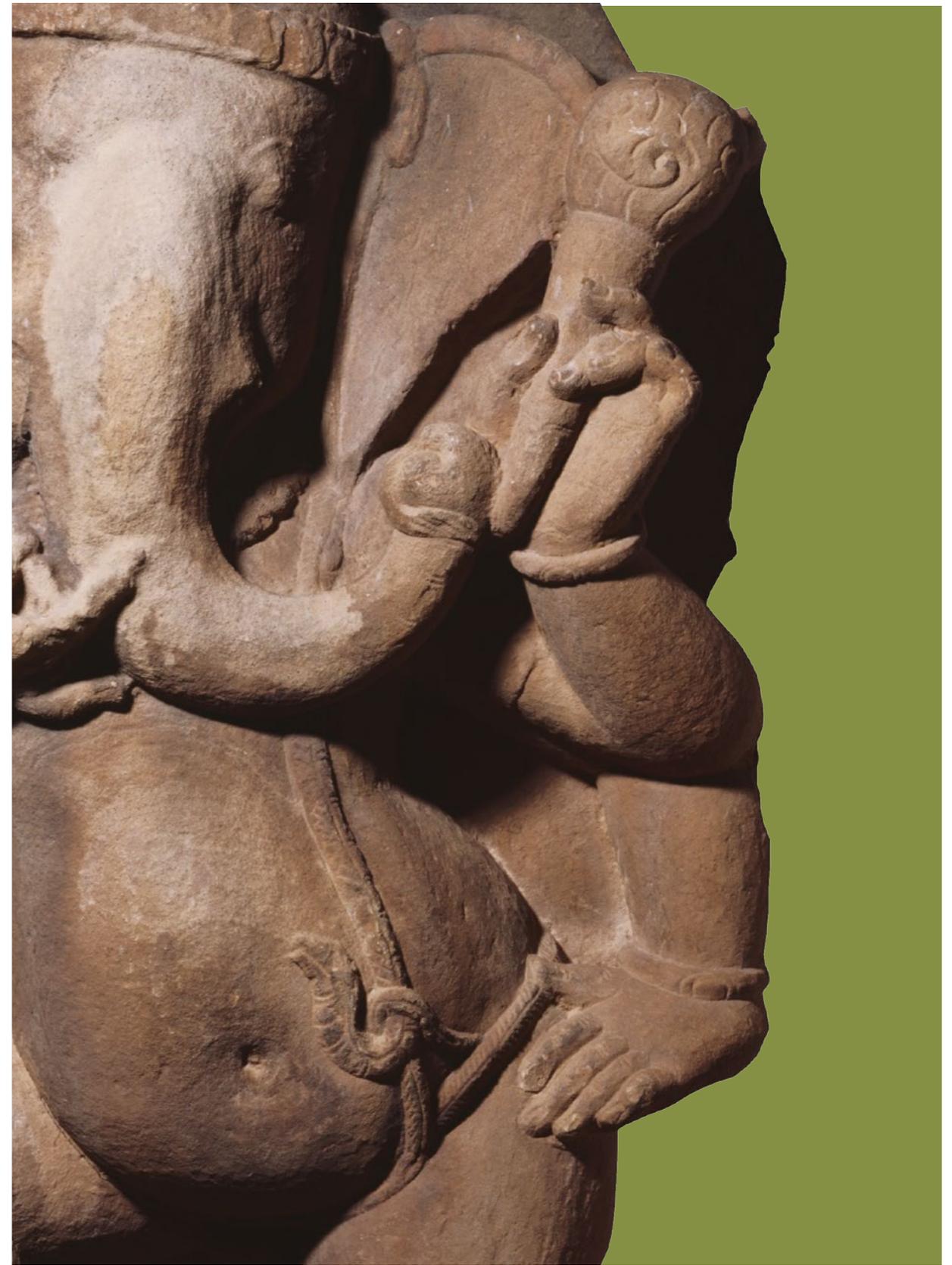
Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



What is the first thing you notice about this sculpture? What's unusual about his body?



How many arms do you see?



What do they hold?



How did the artist create a feeling of dancing in this sculpture?



Performance and visual arts are closely linked in South Asian culture. The movements and poses of dancers communicate stories and let us visualize the characters. To see a dance performance inspired by Ganesha, **[click here](#)**.

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



Describe the setting of this scene. What do you think is happening?



Who do you think are the most important people in this scene? Why?



Describe all the ways the artist used color to tell his story. What colors frame the scene? What colors draw our eyes to the action?



Now do the same for lines. What lines are mostly vertical or horizontal? Where are most of the active, curving lines? Which type of lines draw your attention the most?



Though this painting looks large on screen, it is actually only 8 x 12 inches. Try to imagine the artist using a tiny brush and tiny pots of paint to create the details. Which details do you particularly enjoy?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



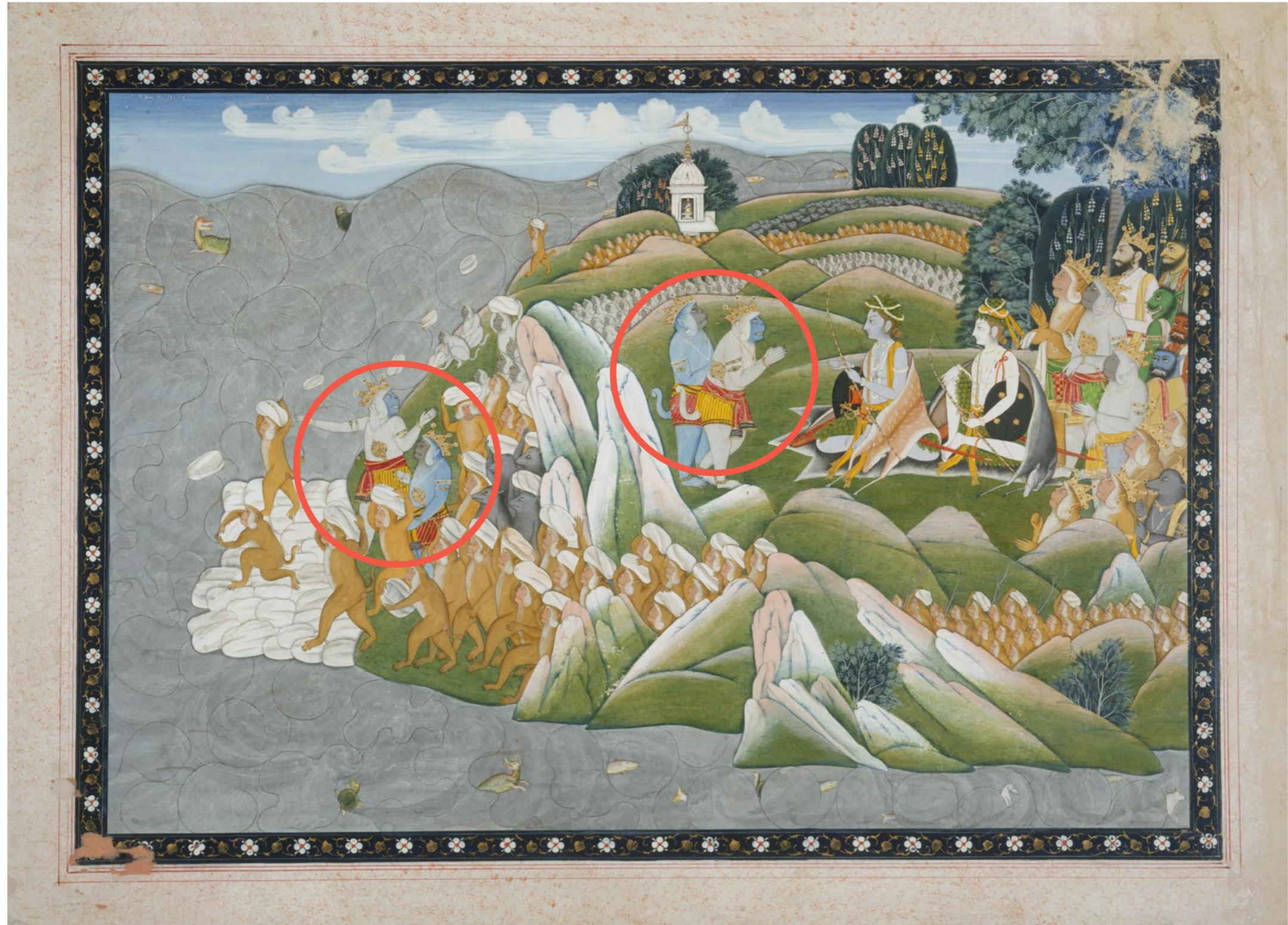
Describe the environment where this story is taking place. Use as many nouns as you can to name all the things the artist has put in the painting.



Now think about verbs. How would you describe the activities that these characters are engaged in? What did the artist do make us look at every part of the painting?



Do you think this is one scene of the story or many? Why?  
Can you find any characters that appear more than once in the picture?

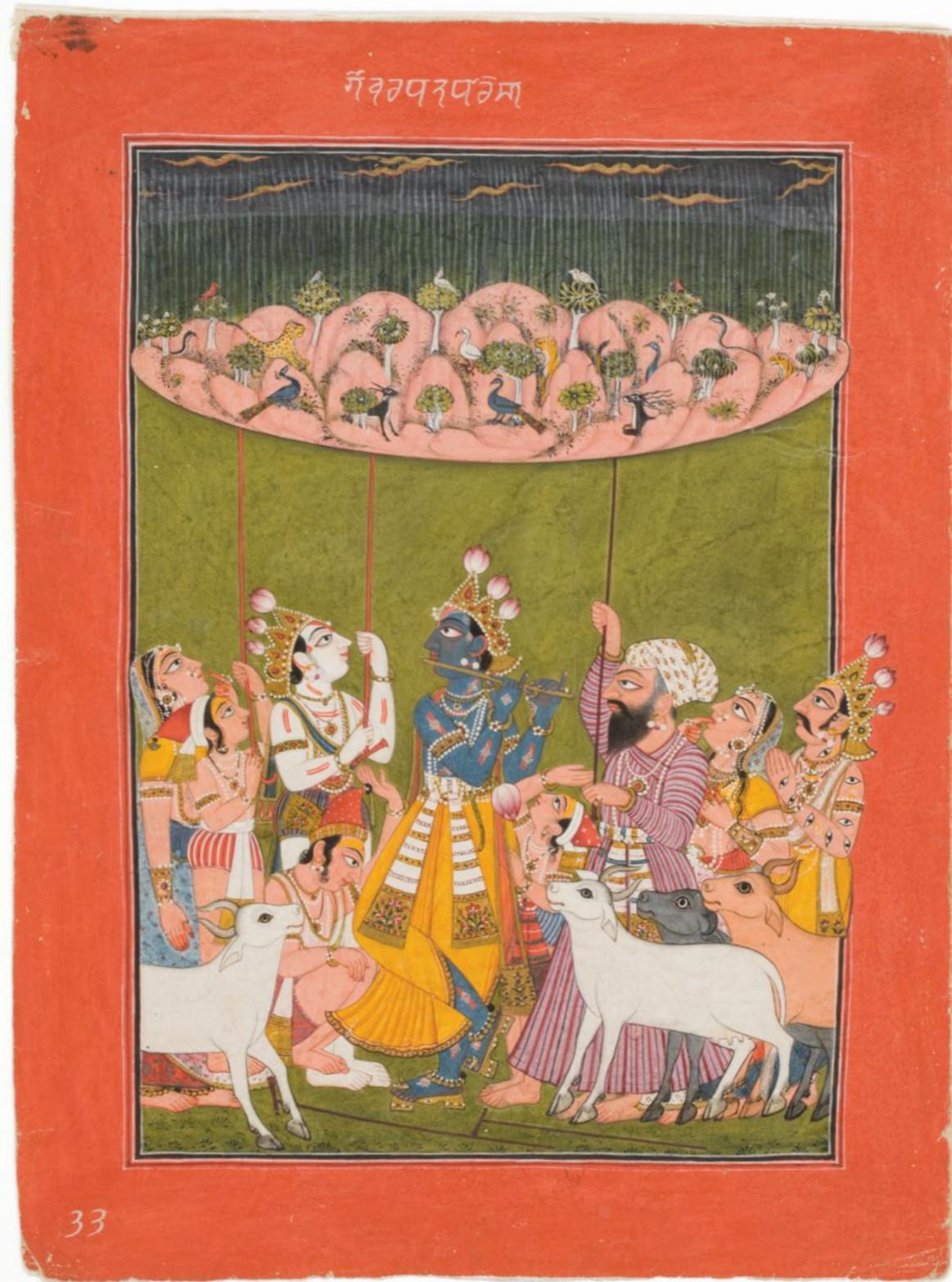


Did you find both times these figures appeared?  
What does that tell you about this illustration?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



Describe the three different sections of this painting and what is happening in each area:



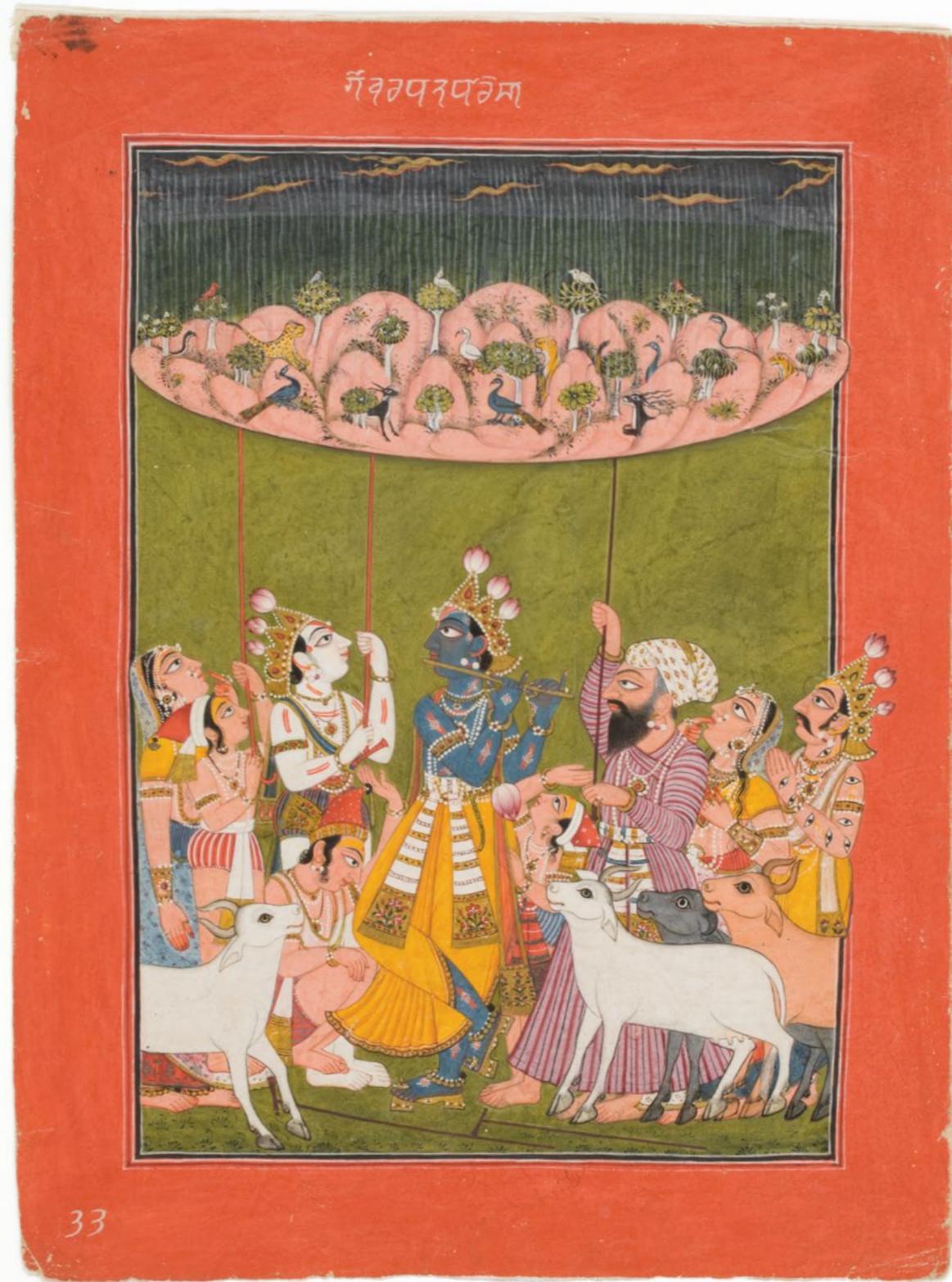
Above the mountain



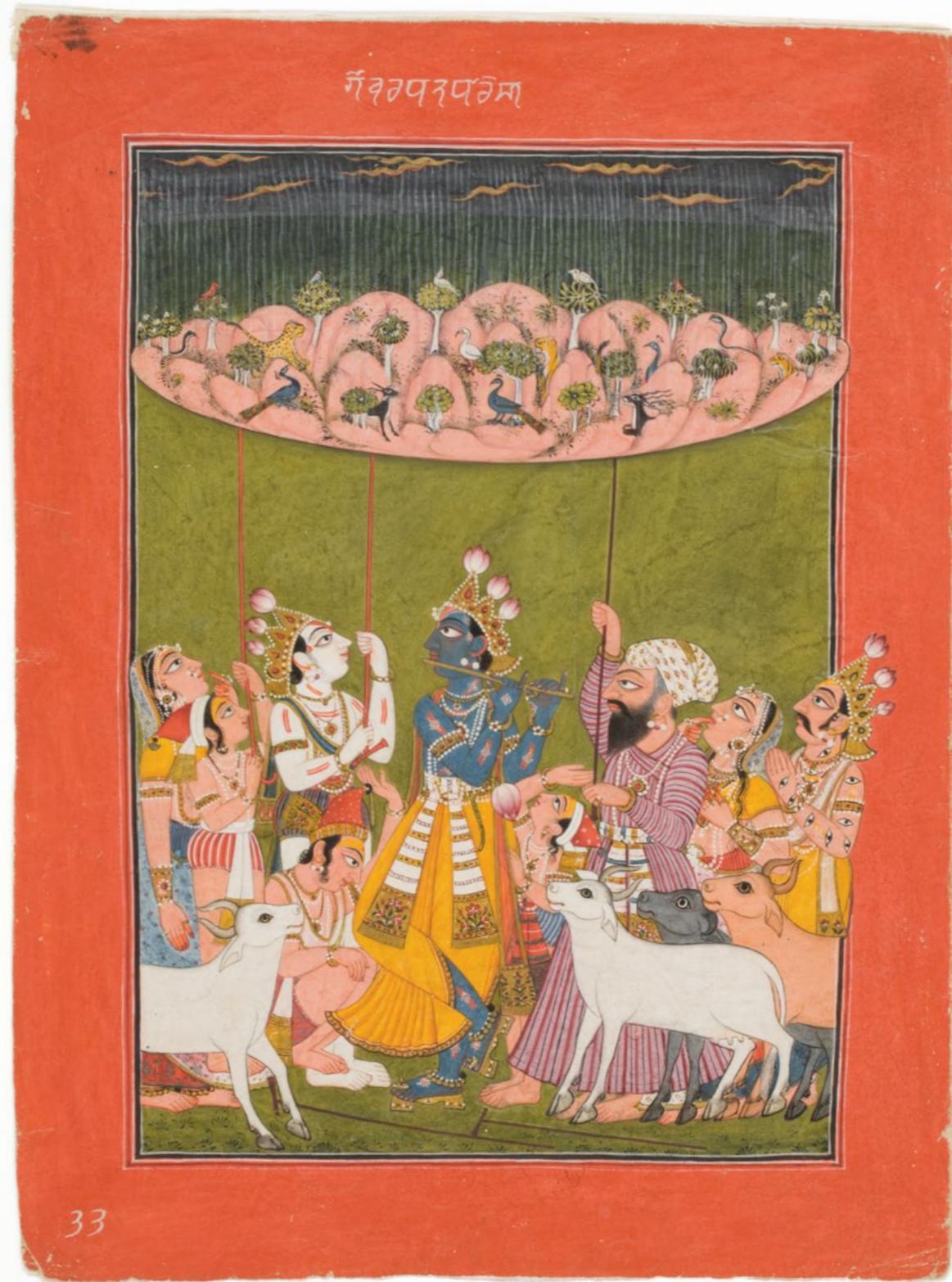
On the mountain



Below the mountain



This painting is full of patterns. How many can you find?  
What are the various moods shown in the painting? How did the artist create them?



Notice everyone's feet. Only Lord Krishna is wearing shoes.  
What else distinguishes him from the others?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



अवह रङ्गत्वा सुखाया मालापरिक  
महावीरं अवा वादं अवा वादं ॥ ति  
सिगा प्रतापसाद रङ्ग । इति चणो मति  
तं पि चणो हवा णो दा ए सा द णो ग डाल ध  
ए सा द रङ्गत्वा । आ स व दि सि पा उ च्चु ए

Describe the people and writing you see on the page.



How does this book shape differ from books you're familiar with? To read the book, a string (not shown) would be loosened and each page flipped up in turn.



What would it be like to write or paint on a page shaped like this?  
What challenges would such a long thin shape pose?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



Describe the posture, facial features, and expression of this figure.



As you observe the sculpture, come up with three words to describe its mood.



What do you think the sculpture is made of? Describe the texture of the material.  
How does that contribute to the mood of the sculpture?



Jina Seated in Meditation



Dancing Ganesha

Compare this sculpture with the one of Ganesha. How did the sculptors express the stillness and tranquility of this Jina and playful activity of Ganesha?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



What colors, shapes, and patterns do you see?



Describe the people and animals you see in this picture.  
Who are the main characters in this battle?



Who do you think will win? What makes you say that?



How did the artist show depth in this picture?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.

سلا باندرک ؛ لی کمرسون اپن



Describe the animals, creatures, and characters you see.



Where is this story taking place? How would you describe the mood of this place?



What kind of interaction do you think the two characters are having?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



What details do you notice about this statue's facial features and hair?



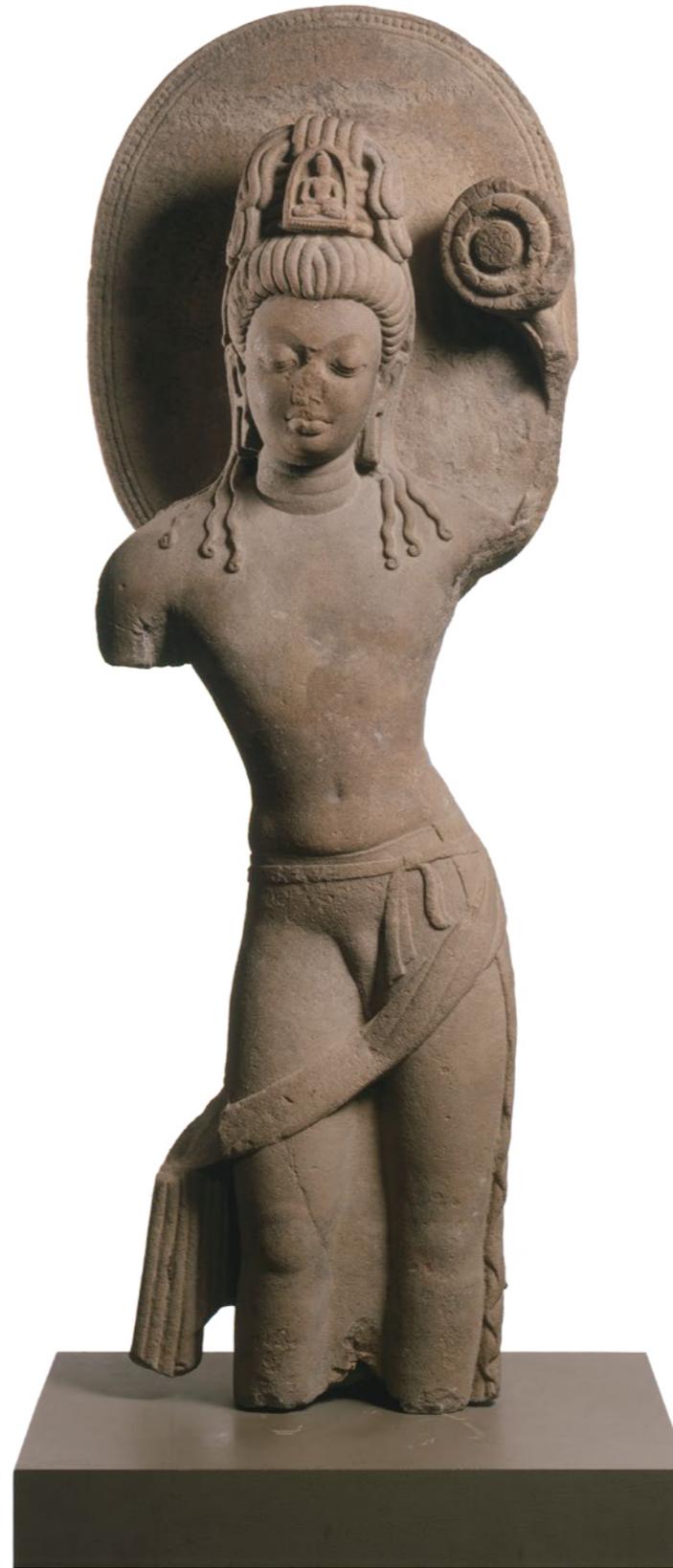
What do you notice about this statue's clothes and posture?



What words would you use to describe this being? Why?



Thailand



India

Representations of Avalokiteshvara vary from culture to culture. Compare the Avalokiteshvara from Thailand to this Avalokiteshvara. How do they look different or similar?

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Take a few moments to look carefully at this work of art.



Describe the organization of these figures. Who do you think might be the most important figure?  
Which are the next most important?



Look at the smaller figures. How many different hand gestures and postures do you see?



The central figure of Vajradhara seems filled with peace.  
How has the artist achieved this?



Do all of the other figures look as peaceful? Why or why not?

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All artwork in this presentation is from the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

**Surya, Sun God, around 1100s**, India (Gift of Mrs. N. R. Norton, Mrs. Richard Waln Meirs, Mrs. Edwin N. Benson, Jr., and Mrs. William A. M. Fuller in memory of Mrs. Jones Wister, 1927-9-1)

**Dancing Ganesha, around 750**, India (Purchased with the New Members Fund, 1971-154-1)

**The Gods Sing and Dance for Shiva and Parvati**, around 1780–90, India (125th Anniversary Acquisition. Alvin O. Bellak Collection, 2004-149-77)

**The Monkeys and Bears Build a Bridge to Lanka**, around 1850, India (Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lessing J. Rosenwald, 1959-93-82)

**Krishna Lifts Mount Govardhana**, around 1700–25, (125th Anniversary Acquisition. Alvin O. Bellak Collection, 2004-149-31)

**Harinegameshin Transfers Mahavira's Embryo**, around 1300–50 (125th Anniversary Acquisition. Purchased with the Stella Kramrisch Fund and with funds contributed by the Committee on Indian and Himalayan Art in honor of Alvin O. Bellak, 2001-184-1)

**Jina (Jain Savior-Saint) Seated in Meditation**, around 1000s, India (Acquired from the National Museum, New Delhi, India (by exchange), with funds contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Roland L. Taylor and with Subscription and Museum funds, 1968-30-1)

**Qasam al-Abbas Arrives from Mecca and Crushes Tahmasp with a Mace**, around 1562–77, India (Gift by exchange with the Brooklyn Museum, 1937-4-1)

**Prince Manohar Receives a Magic Ring from a Hermit**, 1743, India (The Philip S. Collins Collection, gift of Mrs. Philip S. Collins in memory of her husband, 1945-65-22)

**Avalokiteshvara**, Bodhisattva of Compassion, around 450–475, India (Stella Kramrisch Collection, 1994-148-1)

**Vajradhara (the source of all teachings on how to achieve enlightenment)**, 1400s, (Stella Kramrisch Collection, 1994-148-640)

**Apollo Driving the Chariot of the Sun**, 1777, by Domenico Cunego (The Muriel and Philip Berman Gift, acquired from the John S. Phillips bequest of 1876 to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1985-52-22088)

**Avalokiteshvara**, early 8th century, Thailand (Purchased with the W. P. Wilstach Fund, W1965-1-1)

**Manuscript of the Devimahatmya (Story of the Great Goddess)**, 1603, Nepal (Purchased with the Stella Kramrisch Fund, 2001-70-1)