

## **Reliance Industries, Reliance Foundation and Mrs. Nita Ambani Bring 600 Years of Indian History to The Met**

***‘Tree & Serpent: Early Buddhist Art in India, 200 BCE–400 CE’ Opens on 21st July***

**NEW YORK – July 19, 2023 – ‘Tree & Serpent: Early Buddhist Art in India, 200 BCE–400 CE’** opens at **The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met)** on **July 21st**. The spectacular exhibition, tracing the origins of Buddhist art, was made possible through support from **Reliance Industries Limited** and **Mrs. Nita Ambani**, Founder and Chairperson of **Reliance Foundation**, an Indian philanthropic organization.

A longtime, passionate supporter of the museum, Mrs. Nita Ambani was named an Honorary Trustee of The Met in 2019, becoming the first Indian person on the museum’s board of trustees. In this role, she has continued to work to introduce the finest of Indian art to global audiences.

**Commenting on the occasion, Mrs. Nita Ambani said**, “I come from India, the land of the Buddha, and it is a huge honour for me to support ‘*Tree & Serpent*’ through Reliance Foundation’s partnership with The Met. This historic exhibition traces the origins of early Buddhist art from 2nd century BC to 4th century AD, with over 125 objects from ancient India. With the ‘*Tree & Serpent*,’ we take immense pride in showcasing the deep-rooted connection between Buddhism and India. The teachings of Buddha are entwined with Indian ethos and continue to shape global thought. I hope people from around the world come and enjoy this one-of-a-kind experience. We remain committed to bringing the best of India to the world, and the best of the world to India.”

A special preview of *Tree & Serpent*, attended by Mrs. Nita Ambani and hosted by Max Hollein, The Met’s Marina Kellen French Director, saw a number of esteemed personalities from the art world and beyond congregate, including, Indian Ambassador to the United States, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, The US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, and the Met’s Florence and Herbert Irving Curator of South and Southeast Asian, and curator of *Tree & Serpent*, John Guy.

*Tree & Serpent* is a uniquely curated exhibition, bringing over 125 objects dating from 200 BCE to 400 CE to The Met. Organized around a series of interlocking themes centered around original relics and reliquaries from ancient India, the show evokes a time when the country’s religious landscape was transformed by the teachings of Buddha, which in turn, found expression in a rich repository of art devoted to relaying his message. It focuses on the sublime imagery that adorned the stupas – a religious monumental structure found in ancient India. Stupas not only housed the relics of the Buddha but also honored him through symbolic representations and visual storytelling – beautiful specimens of which can be marveled at in the exhibition which culminates with the image of Buddha himself.

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With major loans from lenders across India, as well as from the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States, *Tree & Serpent* reveals both the pre-Buddhist origins of figurative sculpture in India and the early narrative traditions that were central to this formative moment in early Indian art. Exquisite in its details of concept and curation, this rare exhibition transports visitors into the world of early Buddhist imagery such as the titular ‘tree’ and ‘snake’, named after two primary motifs in Buddhist art – the sacred bodhi tree and the protective snake. It explores how the ideas of Buddhism – expressed through its world of spectacular images – grew from a core set of ethical teachings into one of the world’s great religions.

Reliance has supported The Met since 2016, with the exhibition *Nasreen Mohamedi*, the first museum retrospective of the artist's work in the United States and also one of The Met Breuer's inaugural exhibitions. Other notable exhibitions supported by Reliance are *Modernism on the Ganges: Raghubir Singh Photographs* (October 11, 2017–January 2, 2018) and *Phenomenal Nature: Mrinalini Mukherjee* (June 4–September 29, 2019), which marked the first comprehensive display of Mukherjee’s work in the United States.

Under Mrs. Ambani’s leadership, Reliance Foundation has sponsored key cultural events in India such as The Elephanta Festival, and Abbaji, the annual concert of master musician Ustad Zakir Hussain, among the many efforts to recognize the cultural legends of India and ensure their relevance to a younger generation. Reliance Foundation has also been working to preserve India’s rich heritage of art and culture as well as enhance avenues for livelihood of traditional artisans and craftspersons. At the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC), Reliance Foundation has supported the arts and crafts exhibition SWADESH which has provided a global platform for showcasing traditional Indian artisans.

As part of a continued commitment to bring global audiences to Indian art and for everyone to experience it internationally, Reliance has supported not only the series of exhibitions at The Met but also presentations such as *Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings* at the Art Institute of Chicago.

### **About The Met:**

The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in 1870 by a group of American citizens—businessmen and financiers as well as leading artists and thinkers of the day—who wanted to create a museum to bring art and art education to the American people. Today, The Met displays tens of thousands of objects covering 5,000 years of art from around the world for everyone to experience and enjoy. The Museum lives in two iconic sites in New York City—The Met Fifth Avenue and The Met Cloisters. Millions of people also take part in The Met experience online. Since its founding, The Met has always aspired to be more than a treasury of rare and beautiful objects. Every day, art comes alive in the Museum’s galleries and through its exhibitions and events, revealing both new ideas and unexpected connections across time and across cultures.

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## **About Reliance Industries Limited:**

Reliance is India's largest private sector company, with a consolidated revenue of INR 976,524 crore (\$118.8 billion) and net profit of INR 74,088 crore (\$9.0 billion) for the year ended March 31, 2023. Reliance's activities span hydrocarbon exploration and production, petroleum refining and marketing, petrochemicals, advanced materials and composites, renewables (solar and hydrogen), financial services, retail and digital services.

Currently ranking 104th, Reliance is the largest private sector company from India to feature in Fortune's Global 500 list of "World's Largest Companies" for 2022. The company stands 45th in the Forbes Global 2000 rankings of "World's Largest Public Companies" for 2023 - top-most among Indian companies. Reliance has been ranked among the world's 20 best companies to work with, highest amongst Indian companies in Forbes' World's Best Employers for 2022. It features among LinkedIn's "Top Companies 2023: The 25 Best Workplaces To Grow Your Career In India". Website: [www.ril.com](http://www.ril.com)

## **About Reliance Foundation:**

Reliance Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Reliance Industries Limited, aims to play a catalytic role in addressing India's development challenges through innovative and sustainable solutions. Led by Smt. Nita M Ambani, Founder and Chairperson, Reliance Foundation is relentlessly working for the overall well-being and enhanced quality of life for all, focusing on rural transformation, education, health, sports for development, disaster management, women empowerment, urban renewal and arts, culture, and heritage, and has touched the lives of more than 70 million people across India, in over 54,300 villages and urban locations. More on [www.reliancefoundation.org](http://www.reliancefoundation.org)