**Why does it matter where museum objects have come from?**

**How do the journeys of these sculptures influence how they should be treated now?**

**How they should be displayed?**

**How were goddess temples different from other temples in India?**

**How do these sculptures and their stories disrupt your assumptions about Hinduism? Museums? Colonialism?**

**SUGGESTED COURSES:**

- History - South Asia
- History of Indian Art
- Museum Studies

**KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS:**

- The nature of goddess worship in India
- The qualities of goddess sculptures and goddess temples in India
- The range of motives that brought these sculptures from India into Western museums
- How museum spaces and display strategies shape visitors’ understandings of objects
- What should people consider as they decide where museum objects now belong

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why does it matter where museum objects have come from?
2. How do the journeys of these sculptures influence how they should be treated now?
3. How they should be displayed?
4. How were goddess temples different from other temples in India?
5. How do these sculptures and their stories disrupt your assumptions about Hinduism? Museums? Colonialism?

**EXTERNAL LINKS & RESOURCES:**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. WHO THEY ARE: IDENTIFYING THE DISPERSED SCULPTURES

2. WHO THEY WERE: READING THE DISPERSED SCULPTURES

3. WHERE THEY LIVED: REIMAGINING THE LOST YOGINI TEMPLE IN KANCHI

4. HOW THEY LEFT: DISPERSING THE KANCHI GODDESSES AND THEIR COMPANIONS

5. WHERE THEY WENT: COLLECTING THE KANCHI SCULPTURES

6. HOW THEY LIVE: DISPLAYING THE KANCHI SCULPTURES

“In this welcome new book, Padma Kaimal asks important and often refreshingly different questions about Indian art from Tamilnadu. These questions include how we reconstruct, interpret and display a whole world of patronage and temple construction, sculpture and devotion, and the role in it of women as well as men. This book shows the real benefits of focussing intently on a coherent group of just nineteen sculptures now scattered around the world’s museums. In doing so Professor Kaimal challenges us to think differently about issues of restitution of cultural property and not to adopt simply the familiar ‘naked binary oppositions between art market thieves and victims, between an evil colonizing West and a virtuous pillaged Asia.’”

— JOHN REEVE, London University

“With great care and admirable clarity of mind, Padma Kaimal pieces together here an absorbing ‘narrative’, even as the dispersed goddesses, whom she seems to know almost at first hand, look upon us with their time by gentled eyes. Several strands, seemingly scattered but all joined and then limned by art historical inquiry, come together in this truly impressive work: investigation, reconstruction, study of intent, concern for quality, and, above all, an awareness of the larger context. There is a sense of completeness here.”

— B. N. GOSWAMY, Panjab University