



Ministry of Culture

Exhibition “Decorated Arms & Armours” from National Museum Reserve Collection Begin Today

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An exhibition entitled “Decorated Arms & Armours” displaying select daggers, swords, armours as well as pistols from National Museum’s reserve collection, which represents different time period, region, technique and customs associated with these beautiful masterpieces, began here today. Director General, National Museum Dr. B.R. Mani inaugurated it. The exhibition will be on display till 5th November, 2017.

The history of Indian arms and armours begins in pre and proto historic times, however in the historical context they are testified by several sculptures, painting and coins during the medieval period, there was considerable ingenuity and craftsmanship in manufacturing them.

During the Sultanate and the Mughal rule, weapons underwent significant modifications, and weapons with Persian, Arab and Turkish influences became common. Examples are the Shamsheer from Persia and the Zulfikar from Arabia.

A variety of daggers, imported weapons for self protection and hand to hand combat were also in vogue. There were regional variants like the Jamadhar, Jambia and Khanjar of Mughal the Chura of Afghans, the Khapwa of Rajputs, the Qurauli of Sikhs and the Khukri of Nepalis. Many daggers were adorned with ivory, jade, crystal and soap stone and sometimes embellished with calligraphy.

From pre-historic period to the later Gupta period, we find that arms and armour were basically of a functional nature and do not bear much of an aesthetic element. It was from the medieval period that arms and armour began to be profusely ornamented.

The ornamentation on weapons began to symbolize an individual's identity his political power and economic authority. The study of ornamented arms and armour is interesting for the part they played in shaping our history and on the technical side, where arts were applied in various ways the ornamentation techniques, the metallurgy and utility of various materials such as gold, silver, copper, brass, jade, crystal, agate, ivory, horn, mother of pearl, tortoise shell, wood, hide, precious and semi-precious stones etc.

The arms and armours of the common man were used on the battlefield or for hunting were often plain and the decoration kept to a minimum. However, arms and armour of the nobility, military commanders and elite warriors were adorned with precious decoration especially for ceremonial use.

Weapons used by the Royal houses of different dynasties were usually embellished with decorative designs bearing testimony to the fact of historical personalities. The edged weapons like swords, daggers, spears etc were extensively decorated with hunting scenes; and several other patterns. Many of the arms also bore the name of their owners.

Arms, most importantly ornamented daggers were the most common gifts presented to distinguished individuals in recognition of their services. A custom which was prevalent right from the ancient times is still practiced in many parts of India. The arms and armours which made up as gifts were opulently decorated. The decoration constituted things from everyday life and were subjected to a symmetrical arrangement, with pommel itself shaped like the head of horse, figures of deities and parrot among others.

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