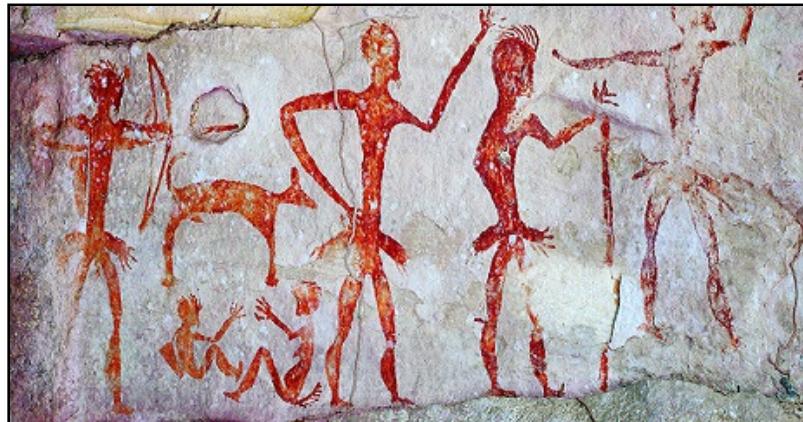


# Anthropology



The anthropological collection at National Museum consists of about 8,000 objects. The collection was built over the years through purchases, gifts by various private donors and some by the surveys conducted by the officials of the department in tribal belts and rural areas.



The collection was further enriched by the acquisition of significant objects from Dr. Verrier Elwin, an eminent British anthropologist. These artefacts reflect the rituals and customs related to the life cycles, economic pursuits and traditions of various Indian communities.



The collection comprises of artefacts in varied materials and mediums such as terracotta, textile, basketry, bone wood, metal, paper, leather, etc. Out of these variety of materials, objects such as puppets, garments, masks, weapons, utilitarian objects, paintings, adornments, musical instruments, to name a few are spread across two galleries: North-East Lifestyle and Tradition, Art and Continuity.



The North-East lifestyle gallery depicts the composite culture of this region. The seven states in the North East of India, colloquially known as the seven sisters have a staggering variety of customs, lifestyles and traditions. The display highlights the regional similarity in cultural traits. The traditional apparels, jewellery, basketry, wood carvings and personal adornments of some of the groups, mirror the life and culture of the different people in the region. The glimpse of everyday life of the Monpa, Sherdukpen, Khowa, Apatani, Mishmi, Adi, Nocte, Wancho, Singhpho and Khampti of Arunachal Pradesh; the Karbi and Bodo of Assam; the Thangkul and Kuki of Manipur; the Mizos of Mizoram; the Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha and Konyak of Nagaland and the Riang from Tripura, are on

view in this gallery.



Apart from the above, the department has also acquired an interesting private collection of about 300 musical instruments from the Sarod maestro Sharan Rani Backliwal which are displayed in a gallery named after her. This gallery provides a glimpse of the remarkable diversity of Indian musical instruments.

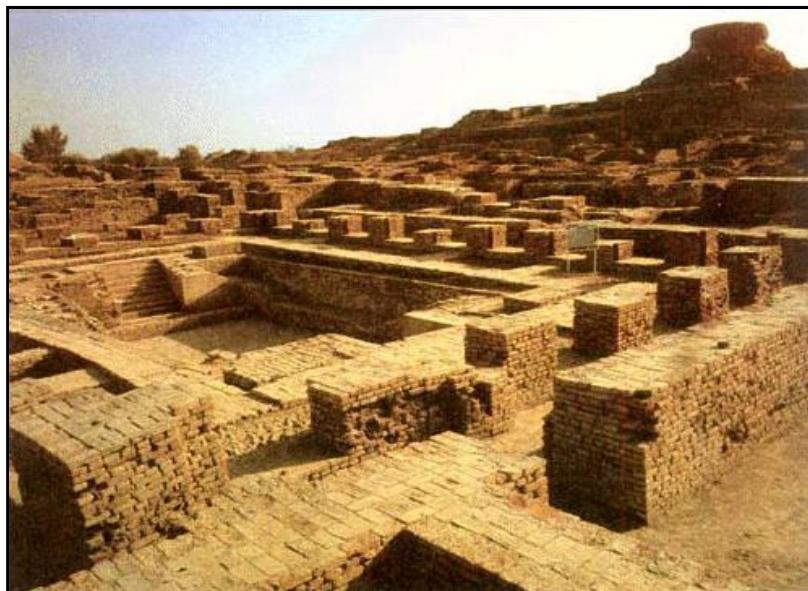


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# Archaeology

- [Harappan Collection](#)
- [Maurya, Shunga and Satavahana Collection](#)
- [Kushana Collection](#)
- [Gupta Art Collection](#)
- [Early Medieval Sculpture Collection](#)
- [Late Medieval Sculpture Collection](#)
- [Bronze Collection](#)
- [Buddhist Art Collection](#)

## Harappan Collection



The first gallery on the ground floor of National Museum is called the Harappan gallery. The collections in this gallery grew out of the discoveries of the pioneering excavations made during early 20th century, and later after the Indian independence in 1947. The Harappan civilization is believed to be one of the oldest world civilizations together with Egypt and Mesopotamia. Objects in this gallery remain the richest and most important of their kind in the world.

The Harappan civilization developed along the mighty river, Indus and for that reason it is also known as the Indus Valley Civilization. Most of the exhibits in this gallery come from important centers of the Harappan Civilization and ancient towns like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Nal (now in present-day Pakistan), Dholavira, Kalibangan, Lothal and Rakhigarhi (in India).

The Harappan civilization is identified as a Bronze-age civilization because many objects have been found that are made up of copper based alloys. For example, the gallery displays the famous ‘dancing girl,’ a bronze figurine that provides an insight into the advances made in art and metallurgy, as well as the hairstyle and ornaments prevalent during the period. The gallery depicts the comparative chronology of four major Bronze Age civilizations in 3rd millennium B.C.E. which existed simultaneously across the world. It also shows the

major Harappan sites and representation of the layout of a street from Dholavira which, gives the visitor a picture of the urban civilization that flourished during the time.

The Harappan civilization produced many seals, a representation of which is displayed in the gallery. A remarkable seal depicts a man in ‘yogic’ posture, surrounded by animals, leading to the speculation that this could be ‘Pashupati’, an early form of Shiva. Many of the seals have inscriptions, the characters and symbols in a language that has not yet been deciphered. These seals give useful information about the civilization of Indus Valley and can be seen in different geometrical shapes.

There are also a few famous examples of the Harappan terracotta figurines. These offer the most intimate insight into the people of Harappan age, since many of the representations seem to have been taken from daily life. Another remarkable collection is the variety of toys, animal-like objects and household implements.

Weights made of Chert in different shapes and of different denominations are exhibited in one of the wall cases. Some well-shaped bronze tools and elaborate jewellery of semi-precious stones are also displayed in other showcases. Polished stone pillars are on show to present an idea of how these stones, made up of parts, were used in architecture – a unique feature of Harappan masonry.

The gallery has on display a range of pottery, representing individual regional styles in terms of both forms and vessel types. These include offering stands, goblets, beakers, tumblers, perforated jars and vases. The remarkable pottery from Nal (3000 B.C.E.) is displayed in a separate showcase. Nal pottery is particularly known for its polychrome ware, which is of high technical and artistic quality. The pottery is made on potters’ wheel, well fired and is adorned with geometrical patterns made intricately with fine lines, parallels and concentric circles.

A skeleton excavated from Rakhigarhi (in present day Haryana) is on display in the gallery. Objects placed with this skeleton in the burial indicate that the Harappans believed in afterlife. The pottery items placed in the grave unearthed from cemetery H in Harappa reveal the funerary customs prevalent during the period. Post-cremation burials are inferred from urns having wide-open mouths; two such specimens are on display.

The wealth and variety of the exhibits offer both a comprehensive idea and evidence of continuity of the Indian cultural legacy.

## **Maurya, Shunga and Satavahana Collection**



The Mauryan Empire thrived from 322 B.C.E. to 185 B.C.E. and its first king was Chandragupta Maurya who

ruled from Patliputra (present-day Patna). The expanse of the Mauryan empire was very large- from Himalayas in the North, to present-day Assam in the East, to Baluchistan in the West, stretching to the South eastern parts of Iran and much of what is now Afghanistan, including the modern Herat and Kandhar provinces.

During the Mauryan period, and particularly during the reign of the Great Emperor Asoka (270 to 232 B.C.E.) and with his embrace of Buddhism, which became the predominant religion during the time, Buddhist influence in the sculptures became visible. Asoka erected many Pillars topped by famous sculptures of animals, mostly lions, of which six survive around India, carrying his edicts. Mauryan art is represented both in court art as well as popular art. While the tall stone pillars and their decorative capitals represent court art, examples of popular art may be seen in sculptures like the Deedarganj Yakshi which now in the Patna Museum in Bihar. Mauryan sculptures were executed in red spotted sandstone (quarried from Mathura) and the close grained buff coloured sandstone (quarried from Chunar). Mauryan sculptures are significant for their large scale, robust and fully formed figures and the unique glaze like polish that provides a sophisticated finish to the sculptures.

The Mauryan period was followed by the Shunga period (2nd-1st century B.C.E.), during which a simpler style was adopted. The sculptures of Shunga period were used primarily to decorate Stupas ( mound shaped architectural edifices that usually housed the relics of Buddha or were erected in the memory of Buddha and great Buddhist teachers) at Bodh Gaya (in Bihar), Bharhut and Sanchi (in Madhya Pradesh). These depict life scenes of Buddha or the Jatakas- tales based on stories of Buddha's previous births. Folk deities like Yaksha, Yakshi and Salabhanjika are also common figures found in Shunga art.

In the Deccan, the patronage of Satavahana kings supported by lay disciples produced a large number of rock-cut caves. Important structures like Stupas were built at Amaravati and Ghantasala, both of which are represented here through some remarkable specimens. The narrative quality of the stories and the creativity apparent in the fantastically sculpted capitals and cornices make these masterpieces of Buddhist art. The Satavahanas added four gateways to the railing of the Great Stupa at Sanchi, in present day Madhya Pradesh, which was enlarged during the Shunga period. Two sculptures exhibited in the gallery belong to the gateway of Sanchi, which convey the grandeur of the Sanchi Stupa and its importance in Satavahana society.

## Kushana Collection



The Kushana gallery represents three overlapping styles of Indian art - Mathura, Gandhara and Ikshvaku. These styles flourished together from 1st to 3rd century C.E. This was a period of immense profusion of visual art, particularly under the influence of Buddhism. Buddha was represented in human form for the first time. Earlier

to this he was depicted through symbols such as the Bodhi Tree and the Lotus. Images of most of the Hindu and Jaina deities were also depicted in human form for the first time during this period.

The main centers of artistic activity under the Kushanas were the regions of Gandhara and Mathura, each of which developed its own distinct style. While Mathura art was indigenous, the art of Gandhara evolved under the Greco-Roman influence, as evident from the iconography, form and costumes of sculptures. Mathura artists used locally available spotted red sandstone, while the Gandharan artists selected the local greyish schist. The artists of Mathura supplied images to all the prevalent faiths, in and around Mathura and also to distant places whereas artists from Gandhara concentrated mostly on Buddhist subjects.

At the far end of this gallery, a few Kushana sculptures in red mottled sandstone stand representative of this school. Among the Gandharan sculptures are the youthful Buddha and Maitreya (future Buddha) images, and a few sculptures depicting scenes from the Buddha's life besides a large number of stucco images and portraits.

In the Mathura sculptures, the female figures are voluptuous and sensuous, as seen in the famous 'Bacchanalian Scene' from Maholi where the courtesan Vasantsena seems to have been portrayed drunk and losing control on her senses. The four faced (chaturmukha) Shivalinga and the pot-bellied image of Kubera from Ahichchhatra are noteworthy examples of Mathura art. Besides these, a large fragment of tympanum presents the Buddha in human form as well as his worship through symbols side by side.

Among the Jaina images, Ayagapata (stone tablet for offering homage), a fragmentary tympanum from Kankali Tila (a famous Jaina site in Mathura in present-day Uttar Pradesh), provide an overview of the Jaina art of Mathura.

The Ikshvaku artists of the 3rd century carried forward the legacy of the Satavahana art and created some of the most beautiful sculptures with the same greenish limestone to adorn Shaiva shrines and Buddhist Stupas and Chaityagrihas as the ones at Nagarjunakonda (present-day Andhra Pradesh). A large number of casing slabs for covering the dome of the Stupa were carved. Since no Stupa has been found intact in South India, these serve as models to visualize the original stupa that once existed. The most important work on display is a casing slab depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha – birth, casting of horoscope, child Siddhartha being welcomed by the guardians of four quarters, Saint Asita's visit to King Suddhodhana and the visit of child Siddhartha to the tutelary deity.

## Gupta Art Collection



The Gupta gallery takes us to the golden era of Indian art (4th - 6th century C.E.) in which, under the enlightened patronage of the Gupta rulers, Indian art attained classic perfection in human, faunal as well as floral forms and set the standard of artistic creation for the coming centuries. Highly animate, youthful and expressive, the divine beings are often represented with a circular halo and decorated with circular floral bands. The major centres of artistic activities during this period were Mathura and Sarnath.

Several new iconographic images emerged in the Gupta period, owing to the evolution and development of religious thought and iconography. For example, a Nataraja from Nachana appears to be the earliest image of dancing Shiva. Ekamukha Shivalinga from Khoh is another masterpiece of this gallery. Yet another rare image is of the Chaturmukhi Surya which is a Shivalinga with four figures representing Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Surya. The image of Vishnu, displayed in the gallery, is known for its grace, beauty and artistic perfection. Also on display in this gallery are several panels from Deogarh in Uttar Pradesh, which depict stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The Buddha images from Sarnath are remarkable for the diaphanous drapery, a major characteristic feature of the Sarnath School.

A large number of terracotta figures have been found in places such as Mathura, Ahichchhatra, Bhitargaon and Kaushambi. Like the stone sculptures, the terracotta figures are also notable for their suppleness of movement, benign expression and perfect proportion. Nearly life-size images of Ganga and Yamuna displayed in the Early Medieval Gallery are unparalleled in the realm of Indian terracotta art. Similarly, the terracotta plaques depicting stories from the Mahabharata present the most eloquent examples of this art in the gallery.

The legacy of Gupta art was adopted and further developed by the Maitraka rulers of Vallabhi in Gujarat (6th to 8th century C.E.) whose sculptures are delicately modelled in soft bluish green stone. A few of them are on display in this gallery.

## Early Medieval Sculpture Collection



The disintegration of the Gupta Empire towards the end of the 6th century C.E. resulted in the growth of regional offshoots of art such as the emergence of local powers like the Palas in the East, Maitrakas in the West, Vardhanas and Pratiharas in the North and Pallavas, Chalukyas and Cholas in the South. The art of this period is characterized by elongation of the human form, a distinct sharpness in facial features, an increase in ornamentation and formal postures.

This gallery presents selected examples of various art-styles which flourished simultaneously in different

regions during this period. A number of Pratihara sculptures are on view but the lintel from Chittorgarh, (in present-day Rajasthan) depicting the images of the Navagrahas (nine planets), shows the stylized depiction adopted during this period in wood carving. Vishwarupa Vishnu (Vishnu shown in his all-encompassing form) of the Maitrakas, though mutilated and completely weathered gives an impression of the monumentality of these sculptures. An image of the river Goddess Ganga, standing on a crocodile is a magnificent representation of Rashtrakuta art from the Ellora Caves.

Some magnificent and exquisite temples were built under the patronage of Western Chalukyan emperors at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal (all in present day Karnataka). The plaques from Aihole depicting a pair of flying celestials are displayed in the foyer and the inner rotunda in the ground floor of the museum.

The Pallavas and the Cholas were great patrons of art and temple architecture. A number of Pallava and early Chola sculptures are on view here; Soma-skanda, the depiction of the Holy Family of Shiva, Parvati and their son Kartikeya and images of Vishnu are particularly noteworthy in their craftsmanship and expression.

## Late Medieval Sculpture Collection



Regional powers like the Palas and the Senas in the East, the Cholas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagar rulers and Nayakas in the South and the Gahadavalas, Paramaras and Chandellas in the North continued to encourage the temple art and architecture in India.

A number of temples were built in and around the region of present day Bhubaneswar in Odisha. The famous Sun Temple of Konark was built during the 13th century C.E. by king Narasimhadeva. The sculptures of Konark are marked by intense movement, perfect sculptural rhythm and clearly defined features. A beautiful image of Surya is displayed in this gallery and the four portraits in stone of the king Narasimhadeva engaged in activities such as archery, worship and discussion with his courtiers are the prized exhibits in this gallery. These are particularly special since the art of portraiture was not very common in those days.

The Chandellas commissioned the construction of the outstanding temples at Khajuraho. A beautiful image of Yogasana Vishnu from the Khajuraho region (present-day Madhya Pradesh) on display is testimony to the superb skills of the artists.

The artists who worked under the patronage of the Paramars, Gahadavalas and Chahamanas also produced some delightful sculptures known for their wood-like carvings. An image of Durga on display here is a masterpiece of

Paramara art. The bust of Vajra Tara is an excellent example of Gahadavala art.

In eastern India, the Pala and Sena artists adorned a number of stone slabs with minute, delicate and jewel-like carving of figures of gods and goddesses. A few of these sculptures done on dark basalt stone, mostly Buddhist stele, are on show.

In Western India, under the influence of Jain patrons, beautiful temples were erected. The best examples of their architecture are seen in the temples at Mount Abu and Ranakpur in Rajasthan. The exquisite marble image of Saraswati from Pallu, Bikaner belonging to the Chahamanas is on display in the foyer.

The temples with sculptural wealth of the South were built largely due to the patronage of the Hoysala kings at Helebid, Belur and Somnathpur in Karnataka. This gallery has some of the rarest and most admirable sculptures, belonging to the Hoysalas, including portrait of a huntress, an image of Kaliya Krishna and others which are as intricately detailed as if they had been worked in gold instead of stone. The highly decorative 12th century Hoysala sculpture of Lakshmi Narayan is of superb sculptural quality.

The Cholas were great builders of temples in the South. Among the large number of Chola sculptures of 10th and 11th centuries C.E. on display in this gallery, one image of Shiva in Lingodbhava form and another Jain deity of Parshvanatha are known for their unique concepts and form. Though the tradition continued during the Vijayanagar period, it emerged as an individual style and lacked the vivacity of the earlier styles.

## Bronze Collection



A selection from the collection of bronzes of the museum is on show in the Bronzes gallery. The art of bronze casting reveals the high level of technical excellence of artisans in the field of metallurgy in ancient India. From the Harappan civilization, the lost-wax process (Madhucchista Vidhana) has been used in casting bronze artworks. A number of images belonging to Shunga, Kushana and Ikshvaku periods have been discovered. However, it was the Gupta period which witnessed the casting of metal images on a large scale and the art form spread to other regions.

Four Buddha images from Phophnar, Madhya Pradesh known for their excellence are on display here. The Pala bronzes from 8th to 10th century, mainly Buddhist in theme are from Nalanda in Bihar. The bronzes from the Himalayan region, especially those belonging to Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, represent Northern India. While Svachchhanda Bhairavi introduces the skill of the metal smith of Chamba and Vishnu Vaikuntha testifies to the high level of craftsmanship of Kashmiri artists. Selected Nepalese and Tibetan bronzes are also on view. The image of Vasudeva-Kamalja (half Vishnu and half Lakshmi) displayed here is a superb example of Nepalese bronze art and iconography.

Bronzes from South India demonstrate the high level of development of the art form, and there are objects

dating from the 6th to 18th century in the collection. A large number of images of Hindu gods and goddess were produced at this time. Shiva Nataraja is a unique creation, combining artistic vision and technical knowledge to perfection. Many forms of Shiva such as Uma- Maheshwara, Alingana-murti, Chandrashekhar, Tripurantaka, Nandikeshvara were depicted and these forms have been displayed to enable a comparative study. Pallava and Chola artisans also created diverse forms of Vishnu, the most popular being Kaliya Krishna, Balagopala and Nrityagopala.

## Buddhist Art Collection



Moving beyond chronological or style based displays, the Buddhist Art Gallery was set up in 1990 as the first thematic gallery of the museum. All the three major schools of Buddhism – Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana - are represented here. The gallery presents a large number of images of Buddhist deities.

The development of Indian Buddhist art is reflected in the sculptures ranging from 2nd century B.C.E. to 12th century C.E. The Hinayana phase is covered by three sculptures presenting the worship of symbols and Jataka narrations, namely the adoration of the Turban, Buddha-pada and Chhadanta Jataka. The Mahayana phase produced some of the most beautiful Buddha and Bodhisattva images.

The bronze image of Buddha from Phophnar kept at the altar and Buddha head from Sarnath are magnificent examples of Buddhist art. Similarly, a slab depicting scenes from Buddha's life is also of special interest in this gallery. The Vajrayana phase is marked with a number of tantrik divinities like Marichi, Chunda, Tara, Manjushri, Simhanada and Lokeshvara. Important Buddhist sites like Sarnath, Nalanda, Bharhut and Nagarjunakonda are also represented in the gallery.

Buddhism did not remain confined to India. While the beautiful silk paintings and stucco heads in the gallery remind us of the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia, the popularity of the Buddhist faith in South-East Asia is evident from the bronze images of Maitreya and Avalokiteshvara created in that region. The larger than life image of the Buddha head from Java is an impressive sculpture in this gallery. Tibet and Nepal are represented here by Thangkas (scroll- paintings) based on Buddhist themes. A modern Buddha image in wood with gold wash from Myanmar is an added attraction.

Objects from the monasteries of Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Tibet and Tawang are exhibited on a reconstructed altar of a Buddhist Shrine. Some typical objects are charm boxes, prayer wheels, brass bell, bone trumpet ambrosia (ritual container) and the wheel of law. Since the works of art are mainly produced for offering at the

altar by devotees, they reflect the superb workmanship of the devoted craftsman.

The focal point of this gallery is the display of the relics believed to be of Lord Buddha. In 1898, an excavation was carried out on a mound at Piprahwa, in Uttar Pradesh, which yielded caskets with fragments of bone, along with ornaments, figures and precious stones. The inscription on a casket speaks of the relics of Lord Buddha. The Archaeological Survey of India conducted further excavations at the site from 1971 to 1977, resulting in the discovery of two more caskets in soapstone, containing more sacred bone relics. The site has been identified with ancient Kapilavastu, the home town of Buddha Sakyamuni. These objects are of great reverence to Buddhist pilgrims, and the Museum gets hundreds of visitors of Buddhist faith from all over the world who come to this room to pay homage and venerate the relics.

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# Arms & Armour



This gallery has on display a fine collection of Indian weapons ranging from the Pre-historic period up to the 19th century C.E. These include, edged weapons, projectiles, smashing weapons, armour for men and animals, ornamental and ritual weapons and fire-arms and war accessories.

Different varieties of bows and arrows- made of cane, bamboo, metal and decorated with ivory, gold and silver are exhibited in the gallery. The inscribed bow of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last ruler of the Mughal dynasty, is also on view.



The history of the Indian sword begins in a very early period as testified by several sculptures, paintings and coins. During the medieval period, there was considerable ingenuity and craftsmanship in manufacturing swords. During the Sultanate and later the Mughal rule, the weapon underwent significant modification, and weapons with Persian, Arab and Turkish influences became commonplace during the period.

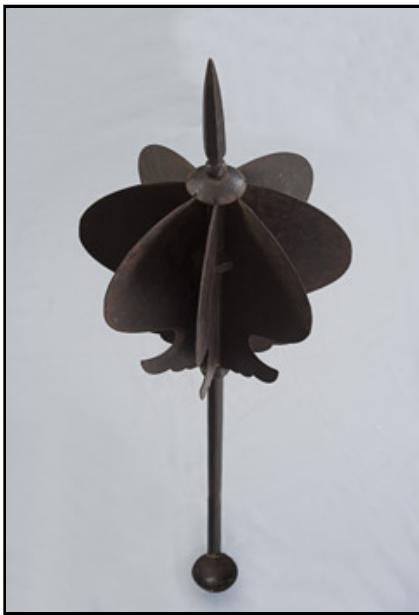
Examples are the Shamasheer from Persia and the Zulfiqar from Arabia. The enameled sword of Jaipur, the Patta of Marathas, the Khanda of Rajputs, the Dao of Assam and some sacrificial and ceremonial weapons are attractions on display in the gallery. The personal swords of Emperor Aurangzeb, Tipu Sultan, Nana Saheb Peshwa and Hamir Singh are historically important pieces on display.



A variety of daggers, important weapons for self protection and hand to hand combat, were also in the vogue. There were regional variants like the Jamadhar, Jambia and Khanjar of Mughals, 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 soapstone and sometimes embellished with calligraphy.



Shields, helmets, breast, back and foot armour were commonly used in combat for self defence. There are armours for the protection for animals used in battles, some examples of which can be seen in the gallery. During the medieval period, ornamentation of armour, particularly shields, was prevalent. The beautifully inscribed shield of Rana Sangram Singh II and the chest plate inscribed with the verses of the Bhagavata can be seen on display.



Spears have a hoary history, of use in hunting and warfare. Spears and javelins made of a variety of material such as reed, bamboo, wood and metal, used for war and ceremonial purposes can be seen in the gallery. The gallery also displays weapons used by the martial races of India, like the Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs.



The invention of gunpowder in the early 14th century C.E. opened a new chapter in the history of Indian arms. Babur, the founder of Mughal dynasty in India, used artillery to decisive effect in the Battle of Panipat. During the course of time, shoulder firearms such as matchlocks, flint-locks, and percussion cap muzzle loading guns were developed which could be used by individuals. The gallery has a number of such fire arms on display, as also pistols, revolvers and multi-barreled short arms. A variety of gunpowder flasks are also displayed.



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# Decorative Arts



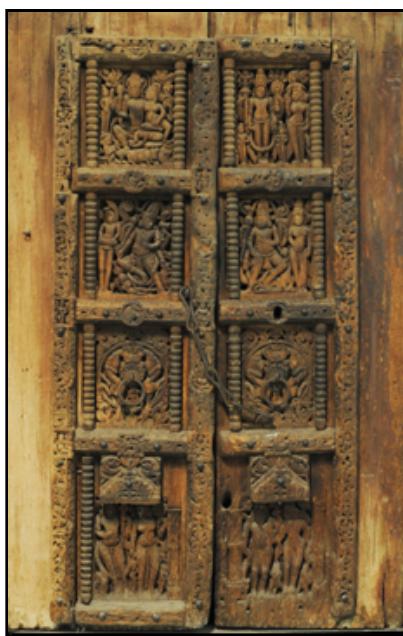
Every culture has its distinct features, which is clearly reflected in its art, ranging from tiles and wood carvings, ceramic or metal utensils to textiles and jewellery. These functional objects are created manually, and help us in understanding the social, religious, economical, commercial and technological development of the society.



The significant period of decorative arts for the world is usually from the 16th century. However, in India, its history goes back to the period of Harappan Civilization (3500-1500 B.C.E.). Artists in India had taken inspiration from nature and its symbolic meanings, which is reflected in all forms of Indian art including decorative arts.



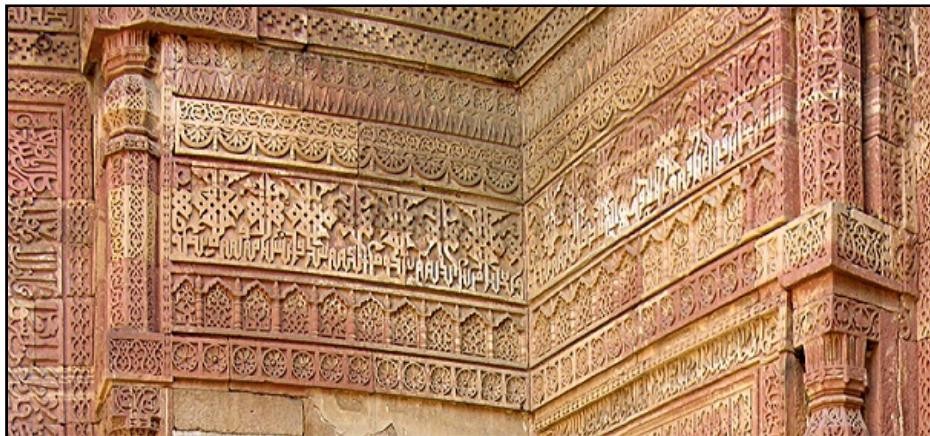
Artefacts of the decorative arts group are crafted for daily, ceremonial and religious uses from a variety of materials like ivory, jade, ceramic, textile, wood, metal, glass, paper, leather and bone.



An array of intricate techniques such as engraving, casting, carving, inlaying, embossing, weaving, printing, dyeing and embroidering are used by the skilled craftsmen to create beautiful works of art and utility. The rich decorative arts collection of National Museum covers utilitarian, ritualistic and secular objects, which have been displayed in four galleries: one gallery each for Wood Carvings and Textiles (second floor), and two galleries devoted to decorative arts (ground floor).



# Numismatics & Epigraphy



Indian coinage has a long and rich historical tradition that provides a key source of information of political and economic changes. It also reflects the cultural and aesthetic development of different periods and regions.

Ancient Indian coinage begins with punch-marked coins, made in silver and copper, found all over India. Issued between the 6th century B.C.E.. and 1st century C.E. by merchant guilds and a few ruling families, it was mainly a trade currency during a period of intensive trade activity and urban development. Towards the close of this period, Roman coins in gold and silver, those of the emperors Augustus and Tiberius being most common, were also brought to India through trade. To the same period belong a series of copper coins of the Janapadas.



The issue of regular dynastic coins began between the 2nd century B.C.E.. and 2nd century C.E., by the Indo-Greeks, the Saka-Pahlavas and the Kushanas.. The Saka coinage of the western Kshatrapas are dated to the Saka era of 78 C.E., thus placing them as the earliest dated coins.

It is with the Kushanas that a variety of interesting features emerge in Indian coinage. While portraiture is common to all the 'foreign' issues and the early indigenous issues inspired by them, the Kushana gold coins introduce us to a series of new concepts attributing divinity to royalty.



However, for sheer variety, aesthetic sensitivity and rich narrative content, the Gupta gold coins remain unsurpassed by any other coinage of ancient India. With the Gupta coinage (4th-6th century) begins a process of indigenization, Greek and West Asian deities got replaced by Indian divinities and

Greek legends by Brahmi. Apart from legitimizing dynastic succession, Gupta gold coins commemorate significant socio-political events, like marriage alliances (king-and-queen type of coin of Chandragupta I) and artistic and personal accomplishments of royal members (Lyrist, Archer, Horseman, Lion-slayer). The iconographic representation of Puranic deities indicating the religious predilections of the Gupta monarch, and coin legends with grandiose royal titles are also significant landmarks.



The South Indian coinage tradition of the early period is conservative, the only exception being that of the Satavahanas (1st- 2nd century CE), whose coins with portraits and bilingual legends were inspired by the Kshatrapa types. Decorative features are rare and divinities are almost absent till the medieval Vijayanagar period (14th –16th century CE).

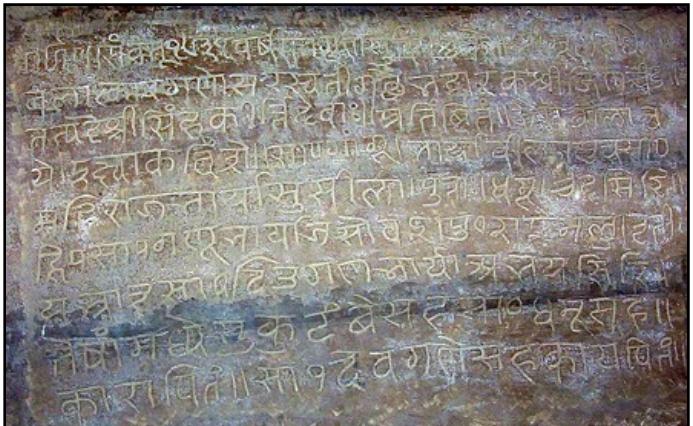


Medieval Indian coinage, represented by the Arab, Sultanate and Mughal coins, is dominated by Islamic traditions. Religious formulae such as the kalima (Islamic creed), the names of the Caliphs as spiritual heads and Quranic verses in beautiful calligraphy as coin legends are characteristic of all the issues. Indigenous elements have been incorporated in various forms from the time of Mahmud Ghazni (10th-11th century CE) whose coins bear legends both in the Arabic Kufic and Sanskrit-Nagari scripts.



Originality and innovative skill characterizes Mughal coinage, which ranks among the greatest currencies of the world. The Zodiacial signs, portraits and literary verses in excellent calligraphy that Jahangir introduced on his coins were preceded by the Ilahi coins of Akbar, which commemorate the religious ideals cherished by the emperor.

Vijayanagar was the only Hindu dynasty whose currency presents a rare example of a standardized issue, which later provided a model for the European and English trading companies. Particularly significant are the Vijayanagar coins with Venkateswara, the deity of Tirupati, represented either singly or with his two consorts, inspiring ‘Single Swami’ pagodas of the Dutch and French and the ‘Three Swami’ Pagodas of the English East Indian Company.



Modern Indian coinage is represented by the issues of European and English trading companies and the Indian states under British rule. Haider Ali issued ‘Pagodas’ depicting Hindu deities, while Tipu Sultan is known for his variety of gold coins incorporating typical Islamic and Hindu features. His gold coins were named after the orthodox Caliphs, his silver coins after the twelve Imams and copper after the astronomical phenomenon.

The European and English trading companies brought with them their respective currencies such as the Dutch Stuiver, Venetian Ducat, Portuguese Cruzado and English Anglina and Carolina. However, imitation of local coins was a common

practice among the trading companies with Vijayanagar coins providing well-known prototypes. The adoption of the Mughal rupee by the trading companies and British rulers of India marked the end of independent currency systems and the beginning of a uniform currency for India.



The coinage of independent India has undergone a number of changes. The first major change coincided with the third anniversary of India's independence on the 15th August 1950, when the designs and the specifications of coins were changed. With the adoption of decimal system from 1st April 1957, a new era was ushered in the history of Indian coinage; rupee was divided into 100 units instead of its 64 paise.

The coin collection of National Museum is remarkable for its variety, rarity and antiquity. It comprises of more than 1 lakh coins, the collection grew through gifts and purchases. The Parrukh, Jhalan, Nagu, Vyas and Deshikachari collections have contributed to making this one of the richest collections of India.

The history of Indian coinage is well represented in the Coins gallery of National Museum. The ancient series of silver punch marked coins of the 4th century B.C.E. and the coins of Indo Greek rulers are some of the oldest on display.

Gold coins of Kushana period, a gold coin of Sailodbhava dynasty with Vindya Shakti inscription, bi-lingual and bi-scriptial coins of Mahmud of Ghazani, gold coin of Delhi Sultanate and Provincial Sultans, Three Mohur and Asirgarh Mohur of Akbar, portrait coins and the Zodiac series of Jahangir, coins of Sangam Age, Ram Tanka of Vijaynagar period and South Indian coins along with the rare coins of Indian Princely States are the main attractions of this gallery.

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# Manuscripts

The word "manuscript" is derived from a Latin word "manuscriptus" which means written by hand. Literally, it is used for writing by hand, whether on paper or on any other material. As a matter of fact, before the introduction of printing press whatever was written could be categorised as 'manuscripts'. Paper is the latest invention for writing a manuscript. It was, however, not introduced before C. 2nd century B.C. Therefore, all existing ancient texts are found written on parchment, palm-leaves, cloth, papyrus, copper-plates, silk etc. According to an Arabic source, *Al- Fehrist*, the Arabs also used camel bones while the Indians and the Greeks used Ivory for writing. Papyrus was discovered first by the Egyptians c. 2800 B.C. which broke the ancient tradition of writing on the above mentioned material. However, the Chinese did not lag behind and became expert in inventing the paper. Interestingly, the paper manufacturing in India started in the middle of the 12th century.

So far, we do not know who wrote the earliest manuscripts, though the history of writing may go back to more than 5000 years. It is, however, generally believed that the religious texts are the earliest manuscripts. The *Tor a* (c. 15th century B.C.) is the first recorded manuscript of the world. This is a religious text handed over to MOSES, the Holy Prophet and it was written on stone plates.

The *Rig Veda*, dealing with the religious and the earliest pouring of human mind is the first text of India, though, one can not say when it was written or compiled. The scholars and historians have different views in respect of the first manuscripts of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

The Mauryan period witnessed the writing of the manuscripts on the subjects other than religion, and the tradition continued during the period that followed under the Sungas, Kushanas and Guptas.

The National Museum has an incomplete text of Holy Quran (7th century A.D.) in its collection inscribed by Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam. It is on the parchment which is restored with a 16th century paper, bearing the inscriptions in Persian. These seven folios, written by Hazrat Ali, were purchased by Sultan Qutb Shah for 50 gold coins. National Museum has further restored its folios.

The National Museum has a variety of manuscripts covering a period from C. 7th to 19th century A.D. These manuscripts are on parchment, palm-leaves and birchbark and deal with the aspects of religion and philosophy, literature and science. There are rare manuscripts written on birchbark in Sanskrit in Sharda script of Kashmir also.

Another important illustrated manuscript *Panch Raksha* of the collection, written on palm leaves, was composed during the reign of Pala ruler, Ramapala Deva at the end of the 11th century. The *Pragya Paramita* in proto-Bengali displayed here, scribed on palm-leaves in c. 12th century A.D., deals with the Buddhist philosophy.



The discovery of paper brought a great revolution in the world of manuscript writing. From China, the art and technique of producing the paper passed on to the Arabs who concurred Samarcand in 751 A.D. According to Abu Hamid Gharnata, Indian papers were similar to those of Khurasani, Mesopotamian and Balkhi. Though, the paper had attained the prime place for writing the manuscript, other materials like palm-leaves etc. continued to be in use till the 19th century and even today the tradition is on.

The oldest manuscripts in the National Museum are dateable between 7th and 10th century. The best preserved manuscripts are religious in nature as they got full attention for their spiritual significance, while the others were damaged or suffered due to the Indian climate.

The Jain Kalpasutras are devoted to the Jain religion and these contain the teachings of Lord Mahavira Jaina and other *Tirthankars*. The *Kalpasutras* were generally

illustrated in Western India and are written on paper. Most of them belong to the 15th century. The language is **Prakrit** and script is **Devanagri**. These manuscripts are highly illuminated with gold.

Among the finest Persian manuscripts, the Babar Namah, Bustan, Duwalrani Khizr Khan, Kalila Dimna, Razmnamah, Khamsa, Shah Namah, Sikandar Namah, Akbar Namah and the Ramayana are simply the best. Some of the Arabic manuscripts are the copies of the Holy Quran written on parchment, cloth and paper, which are displayed here. The manuscripts on paper are highly decorated as gold and lapislazuli are profusely used. They represent various schools and the scripts like Kufi, Raihan, Naskh, Thulth etc.



Sanskrit is the most ancient language of India and the National Museum has hundreds of rare and important manuscripts in its pride possession, written in **Sharda**, **Devanagri** and **Oria**, various subjects are covered. Some specimens of **Braj Bhasha**, Awadhi etc., displayed in this exhibiton, are added attractions.

The Mughal rule in India was a unique period for art and literature. The Mughals were indeed great patrons of the arts. The founder of Mughal dynasty, Zahiruddin Babur had a refined taste for art and literature. He was a man of diverse qualities, a warrior, a calligrapher, a poet, an art critic and emperor. He is credited to have invented new script, **Khat-i-Babri**. However, it being a difficult script, could not become popular like others. According to Abdul Qadir Badauni, the author of **Munta Khabut Tawarikh**, the script was existing during the reign of the great Mughal Emperor Akbar, but only few calligraphers could practice it. The Baburnama itself shows the greatness of its literary grace and quality.



Humayun had intensive interest in astronomy, astrology, paintings and literature. He always used to carry a small library with him even in the war time. While invading Khambat (Gujarat), he had with him Taimur Nama, besides other manuscripts illustrated by the great Bahzad. Jauhar Aftabchi, a personal attendant of Humayun, states "....when Humayun took shelter in the fort of Amarkot, one day a pigeon flying over the fort, sat nearby him. Humayun caught the pigeon and was highly impressed by the beauty of the pigeon. He ordered an artist to make the painting of the bird and after finishing the picture the bird was freed...". Humayun further took new ideas from Persian artists. He met Mir Sayid Ali Tabrezi and Khawaja Abdus Samad Shirazi and brought them to India with him. Both were great masters of miniature paintings besides being great calligraphers. While ascending the throne of D^lhi second time, he assigned them to illustrate the **Dastan-i-Amir Hamza**.



Akbar was not a literate man like his ancestors, but he had an open heart and mind for the promotion of art and literature. A number of Sanskrit, Arabic and authentic works of other languages were translated into Persian during his period. The **Mahabharat** with the title of **Razm Nama**, **Ramayana**, **Nal Daman**, **Bhagwat Gita**, **Bhagwat Puran** and **Kalila-wa-Dimna** are few among various manuscripts which were translated into Persian. This was an extra-ordinary era and is described as a golden age for the art and literature of the Mughal period.

Jahangir too was a great patron of the art and literature. His memoirs **Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri** is believed to contain a good account of history of his period. The Emperor followed the tradition of **Amir Taimur** and Babur who used to maintain important notes and incidents. His **Tuzuk-i-Asifia**, mirrors the emperor as a politician, a great critic of miniature paintings, a scholar, a historian and a scientist.

Shahjahan, and Aurangzeb were learned rulers. Their courts were attended by the scholars. Shahjahan tried his best to take personal interest in promoting art and literature. It was due to their support and taste that a number of outstanding manuscripts were produced. The tradition continued down to the last Emperor of the Mughal dynasty, Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Other Hindu rulers of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Kashmir etc. had no less interest. They have left behind a series of invaluable that speak very high of their respective times. A few works like Rigveda Samhita (1514) Jutish Shastra (c. 16th century, Kashmir) Sanghraini Sutra (1639), Kumarsambhava (1675) Gada Purva of the

Mahabharta (1800) among others are on show for the first time in this exhibition.

Besides some calligraphic specimens of the Mughal period, some rare manuscripts from the courts of Golkunda, Bijapur and Kashmir find place in the exhibition. The Dasam Granth of Guru Gobind Singh, founder of the Khalsa, is yet another masterpiece that is exhibited in this exhibition.

The National Museum has acquired nearly 14,000 manuscripts in various languages and scripts, covering a large number of subjects and representing various schools and provinces. It comprises fragmented or full manuscripts, of which about 1000 are illustrated. The non-illustrated manuscripts are calligraphic, which have ornate letters almost transforming into pictures. Many of the illustrations and texts are rendered using real gold foil. These manuscripts are also the source for critical studies in arts and other related subjects. Covering a period of about thirteen-fourteen hundred years, broadly from the 7th century to the 20th century CE, the National Museum manuscripts are executed on a myriad of materials such as parchment, birch bark, palm leaf, paper, cloth, wood and metals. Besides the classical Sanskrit or sacred dialects like Pali, Prakrit and trans-border languages like Persian, Arabic, Chinese, Burmese or Tibetan; the collection has manuscripts rendered in Hindi and its many dialectic forms such as Rajasthani, Maithili, Awadhi, Braj, Bundeli etc., Many of the manuscripts in the collection are not only rare but often bear Royal seals and signatures of different Emperors authenticating their originality.

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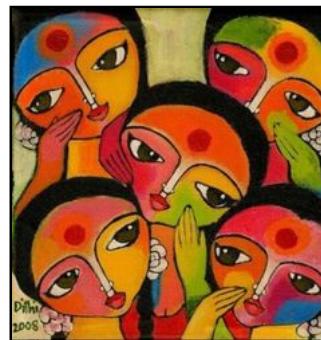
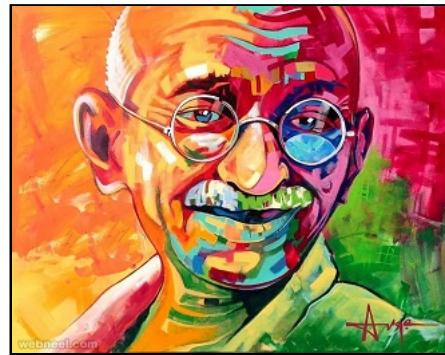
## Paintings



National Museum has nearly 17,000 paintings, representing all important styles of Indian miniatures. It is one of the largest collections of miniature paintings in the country. The Miniature painting tradition has been a key form of Indian painting apart from murals, cloth paintings and paintings on wood. Among miniature paintings, the main schools have been- the Deccani (from the South), Mughal (Spanning Central and North India), Rajasthani (West India) and Pahari (From the hills of the North).

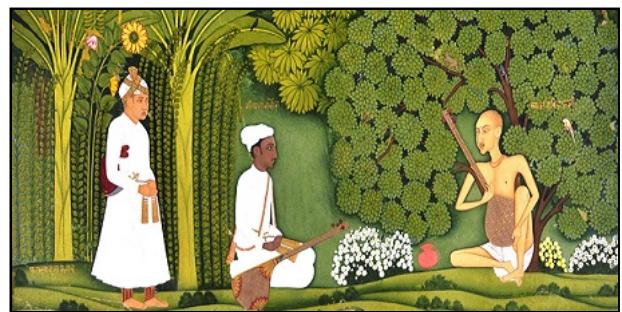
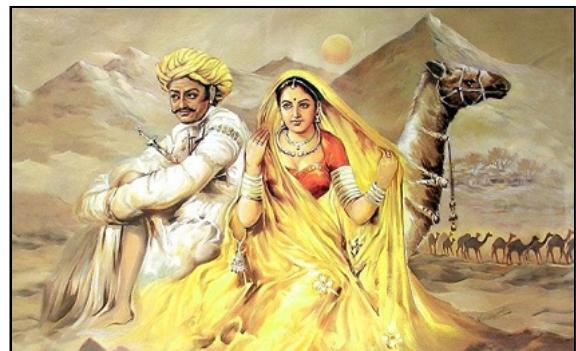
The Deccani style of painting, assimilated the influences from Iran, Europe and Turkey and evolved into a synthesized art form which differed from the styles prevalent in the north. The rare work 'Hindola Ragini' in National Museum Collection from Bijapur (in present-day Karnataka) is in early Deccani style and presents the Raga Hindola where Krishna is on a swing surrounded by lady musicians. A later Deccan period painting depicts Chand Bibi, the celebrated woman warrior of Bijapur playing polo.

The Mughal School is showcased in a dated folio of Baburnama, the autobiography of Babur (1598 C.E.); 'Tutinama', the story of a



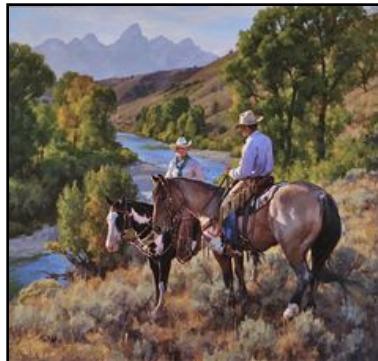
parrot and 'Tawarikh-i-Alfi' (the history of a thousand years) from Akbar's reign. The finish, blending of colours and the bold execution of calligraphy is remarkable in these works. Dating from Jehangir's reign is his portrait and another of his meeting with Sufis. Shahjahan is depicted in a profusely illustrated painting describing the marriage of his son Dara Shikoh.

Rajasthan is equally famous for its miniature art, patronized mainly in the Royal courts from the 15th to the 19th century CE. Each Rajput style from various kingdoms evolved distinctively but with certain commonalities. There are numerous works in the Malwa, Mewar and Kishangarh styles. Most Rajput art focused on religious themes – the epics- Ramayana and Mahabharata, Krishna's life and some scenic landscapes. 'Basohli' paintings, the oldest school among the 'pahari' style took its name from a town in Himachal Pradesh. There is a rare picture of Hari-Hara and a folio of the picturisation of the famed 'Gita Govinda' series. This work has been of great importance in the development of 'Bhakti' traditions of Hinduism. The Kangra School is covered by a miniature showing King Sansar Chand celebrating the birth of Krishna, as well as illustrations from Bhagavata Purana, Shiva Purana and Parijata Haran. A painting depicting a scene from the Ramayana is representative of the Chamba School.



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## Pre-Columbian & Western Arts



The collection of Pre Columbian art donated by Mr & Mrs Heeramaneek represents the principal cultures of the Pre- Columbian world. There are pieces of art from Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and other regions of South America.



This is a rare and unique collection and perhaps the only one of its kind in India. It includes gold and silver utensils and ornaments, decorated earthen pots, terracotta figurines, stone implements, stone sculptures, various grave-goods and objects used in games and architectural elements. There are also some beautiful examples of the famous Coptic textiles from Egypt.



The Olmec culture from Mexico is characterized by huge stone sculptures representing human heads, as well as small

sculptures in jade and other stones. These people are credited with the origin of writing, numerals, the astronomically based calendar and the dating system, which were adopted by other Mexican and Central American people.

The Totonec, Mayan, Zapotec and Aztec peoples had a tradition of stone architecture and producing a wide range of art objects including stone sculptures, pottery, terracotta figurines, murals, metal objects and illustrated manuscripts.

In Peru, the oldest culture known as Chavin (1200 to 400 B.C.E.) extended its influence over a great part of the Andes and Coastal regions. It is typified with monumental stone architecture, carved in a stylized linear pattern. A few examples of stone carving, a small puma in typically stylized form and some linear decorated bowls are all part of the Heeramanneck collection.



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