

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FACT SHEET

IMPORTANT NEWLY DISCOVERED ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS
ADDED TO NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART'S

SCULPTURE OF INDIA: 3000 B.C. - 1300 A.D.

OBJECTS TO BE ON VIEW BEGINNING WITH VISIT TO GALLERY
OF PRIME MINISTER RAJIV GANDHI
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 1985

OBJECTS

Two recently discovered sculptural pillars and their three crossbars dating from the First Century A.D., from Sanghol, northwest of Delhi, have been added to the exhibition, Sculpture of India: 3000 B.C. - 1300 A.D., which opened May 5, 1985 and is on view in the Gallery's East Building through September 2, 1985.

The objects were created in Mathura, the leading center of Indian sculpture from the First Century to the middle of the Fifth Century A.D., and then buried in Sanghol. There is no clear evidence to indicate why the objects were buried there; archaeologists can only speculate they were buried for reasons of safety. Knowledge of their existence was subsequently lost until this year.

DISCOVERY

On February 2, 1985, G. B. Sharma from the Department of Archaeology of the State of Punjab and his colleagues discovered the remains of a Buddhist stupa, or reliquary mound, in Sanghol. As they were conserving the stupa, the archaeologists found a large number of railing pillars and crossbars concealed in a nearby pit.

DESCRIPTION

One pillar depicts the motif of a goose, who, mistaking drops of water falling from the wet hair of a lady for pearls, opens his beak to swallow them. The lady has just finished her bath and is wringing her hair, her head gently tilted. The other pillar is satirical and depicts a young woman riding on the back of an obese man with coarse and wrinkled features. The three crossbars bear lotuses, symbolic of Water Cosmology, the ancient Indian religious concept that water is the source of all that exists. The sculptures are carved from a spotted red sandstone typical of Mathura work.

LENDER OF WORKS

The objects are being loaned to the exhibition by the Directorate of Archaeology.

FESTIVAL OF INDIA

Prime Minister Gandhi's visit to Washington inaugurates the Festival of India, a year of cultural, scientific and educational exchanges between the United States and India. Prime Minister Gandhi and Mrs. Reagan are the honorary patrons of the Festival of India.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer), or Carolyn Amiot, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565 (202) 842-6353.