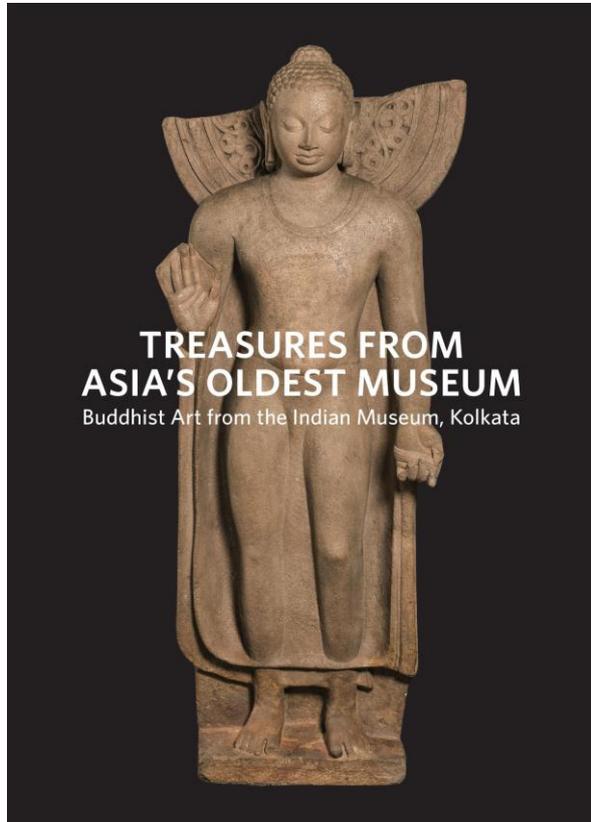


Media Release

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**AN EXPLORATION OF BUDDHIST ART FROM THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT,  
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF RELATIONS WITH INDIA**

**Singapore, 18 June 2015** – Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Mr Lawrence Wong and Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) Dr Mahesh Sharma co-officiated the opening of the ***Treasures from Asia's Oldest Museum: Buddhist Art from the Indian Museum, Kolkata*** exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum this morning. The exhibition takes place in the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Singapore's independence, while also celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> year of diplomatic relations between the Republic of India and the Republic of Singapore.

Casting the spotlight on some of India's most notable Buddhist art, the ***Treasures from Asia's Oldest Museum: Buddhist Art from the Indian Museum, Kolkata*** exhibition is the product of a collaboration with the Indian Museum in Kolkata – Asia's oldest – and is sponsored by the Indian government. Chronicling the evolution of Buddhist art from the 2nd Century BC, the exhibition presents important sculptures and paintings tracing the Jataka stories (past life stories of the Buddha), scenes from the life of the Buddha, and symbols used to represent Buddhist concepts.

Dr Alan Chong, Director of ACM, explained: “Singapore’s heritage owes a great deal to India. Founded in 1814, the Indian Museum in Kolkata is the oldest museum in Asia, and inspired other institutions, including the Raffles Museum, the forerunner of Singapore’s national museum. We are grateful to the Indian Museum for its generous loan of important objects, and to the Indian government for sponsoring this exhibition that celebrates fifty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.”

The exhibition features over 80 rare objects which trace the cultural shifts and changes in style as Buddhist art progressed, from the Shunga dynasty, to ancient Gandhara, the Gupta Empire, and the Pala Empire.

The exhibition begins even before one enters the museum, with a marker of the longstanding relationship between Singapore and Kolkata. Just outside the ACM, there is an obelisk, erected in 1850 to commemorate the visit to Singapore by Marquess Dalhousie, British Viceroy of India, recognising Singapore’s status as a port city under British rule through the government of India.

A connection can also be made to the Singapore Stone, now at the National Museum. Originally part of an ancient stone marker at the mouth of the Singapore River, it was dynamited in 1843 to widen the passage. Inscribed fragments of the stone were then sent to the Indian Museum, Kolkata. A large piece was later returned to the then-Raffles Library and Museum in 1918.

In the exhibition, visitors will be able to view dramatic sculptures, such as a 1.2-metre-tall sandstone Standing Buddha from Sarnath, dating to the 5th Century; a Buddha Preaching, seated cross-legged, from Gandhara (present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan), which shows the influence of Mediterranean classical art.

Later sculptures show stories from the Buddha’s life and various bodhisattvas. Among them is a 10th-century carving from Nalanda of Queen Maya giving birth to the Buddha; an 11th-century Pala sculpture of the Avalokiteshvara; and a fearsome rendition of Samvara, the deity of protection, with fangs bared, garlanded with skulls, and engulfed in flames.

***Treasures from Asia’s Oldest Museum: Buddhist Art from the Indian Museum, Kolkata*** will be open to the public from 16 June, 2015 to 16 August, 2015.

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### **About the Asian Civilisations Museum**

The Asian Civilisations Museum is dedicated to exploring the rich artistic heritage of Asia, especially Singapore's ancestral cultures. Through a collection of works of art and a varied exhibition programme, we hope to deepen understanding of Southeast Asia, China, South Asia, West Asia, and the Peranakan world. Rare among museums in Asia, the ACM connects audiences with many cultures.

### **About the exhibition**

#### ***Treasures from Asia's Oldest Museum: Buddhist Art from the Indian Museum, Kolkata***

Exhibition Dates : 16 June 2015 to 16 August 2015  
Venue : Asian Civilisations Museum  
1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555  
Website : [www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg)  
Enquiries : 6332 7798 / [nhb\\_acm\\_vs@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_acm_vs@nhb.gov.sg)  
Admission charges : Free admission for Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents  
Opening hours : Monday to Sunday: 10am to 7pm (to 9pm on Friday)  
Getting There : By MRT – Raffles Place  
By Bus – 75, 100, 107, 130, 131, 167  
By Car – Parking is available at Parliament House, The Fullerton Hotel, One Fullerton, and Six Battery Road

### **Programme Highlights**

#### **Curator Tour: Treasures from Asia's Oldest Museum**

26 June, 24 July, 14 August  
7.30 to 8.30pm  
Free admission

Join Senior Curator Theresa McCullough for a guided tour about the treasures from Asia's oldest museum, the Indian Museum in Kolkata. Marvel at striking sculptures from the ancient cultures of Pala and Gandhara that have inspired awe and adoration across the centuries, and learn about the evolution of Buddhism through stories and symbols.

#### **Saturdays@ACM: Supersized!**

4 July  
1 to 5pm  
Free admission

Shake things up with a slew of Indian cultural offerings this month! Enjoy colourful performances and exciting adventures inspired by the past-life stories of the Buddha. Create your own masterpieces with creative craft activities and more!

Visit [www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg) for more exciting talks and programmes.