

Frequently Asked Questions for Indian Media

Networks of the Past: A Study Gallery of India and the Ancient World

1. What is the *Networks of the Past: A Study Gallery of India and the Ancient World*?

It is a landmark educational initiative by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), Mumbai, whereby a gallery is being created in Mumbai with over 300 archaeological objects from 15 Indian and global museums.

It explores India's connections with ancient world civilisations and highlights cross-cultural exchanges between the ancient civilisations of Harappa, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, and China.

2. Who are the major partners in this initiative?

Conceptualised by

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai

Supported by

Getty

Endorsed by

Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Additional support by Citi

Jointly Curated by

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai

The British Museum, London

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Museum Rietberg, Zurich

The Benaki Museum, Athens

In Association with

The Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait

The Ephorate of Antiquities of the City of Athens

Archaeological Survey of India

National Museum, New Delhi

Indian Museum, Kolkata

Bihar Museum, Patna

and several state museums

University Academic Programme

In collaboration with the Cambridge University – Global Humanities Program and 20 Indian Universities

Four years in the making, this study gallery is the result of additional collaborations, which now include the Museum Rietberg, Zurich; the Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait; the Benaki Museum, Athens; as well as the Ephorate of Antiquities of the City of Athens, Ministry of Culture, Greece.

The Ministry of Culture, Government of India has given its generous support, and facilitated lending of antiquities from the rich collections of the Archaeological Survey of India, the National Museum, New Delhi, the Department of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM), Government of Maharashtra, the Allahabad Museum, Prayagraj, the Government Museums of Lucknow and Mathura, Indian Museum, Kolkata and the Bihar Museum, Patna.

3. Why is this project significant for India?

Thanks to the exceptional generosity of our collaborators, the gallery will display more than 300 important archaeological objects for three years, affording India's growing young population its first prolonged encounter with original works of classical art from the cultures of India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The narrative places India at the heart of ancient global interaction, emphasising its role as both a contributor to and beneficiary of ancient cultural networks.

4. How long will the gallery remain on view?

The Gallery will remain on view for three years at CSMVS, allowing in-depth engagement for schools, universities, and the wider public.

6. How were the objects selected for the gallery?

Selections were made through a collaborative process where Indian curators identified themes relevant to Indian audiences, and international partners contributed complementary works from their collections. Together, they built a narrative of the interconnected ancient world.

7. What kind of objects will be displayed?

Highlights include Harappan pottery, and seals from Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets, Egyptian sculptures, Greek and Roman portraits, Chinese ceramics and jade, jewellery, a few textile fragments, and even an Egyptian cat mummy. Everyday objects that illustrate life, trade, and knowledge-sharing will also be shown.

8. What is unique about the Harappan focus?

The gallery begins with and places special emphasis on the Harappan (Sindhu-Sarasvati) Civilisation, presenting archaeological finds from Mohenjo-daro, and Harappa in the CSMVS' collection complemented by significant loans from the Archaeological Survey of India. A model of the Harappan city of Dholavira anchors the narrative which shows how the Harappan cities were built, how they were fed, what they created, and how they traded. It demonstrates how the earliest South Asian civilisation was connected to Mesopotamia, Afghanistan, and Iran through trade and culture.

9. How will the exhibition benefit students and educators?

The project is designed as a teaching study gallery, where educators can develop their teaching modules, and enrich their curriculums by bringing students into the Museum to see and learn from original objects. This will be achieved through

- CSMVS-University partnerships across India

- Lecture series and workshops with international scholars
- Activities at the new Ancient World Learning Centre (Nalanda) at CSMVS
- A website featuring all the objects and contextual materials with teaching resources
- Outreach through the CSMVS **Museum on Wheels** and **Trunk Museum projects** for rural schools

10. How does this initiative differ from past CSMVS exhibitions?

For the last decade, Sabyasachi Mukherjee, the Director General of CSMVS, has worked to bring global art and ideas for Indian audiences through international exhibitions at the CSMVS museum in Mumbai. These have mostly been pre-curated exhibitions from international leading museums.

The Ancient World Project **is a CSMVS-led curatorial initiative** that tells history through objects. In an unprecedented attempt, this has been achieved by creating a Study Gallery of over 300 archaeological objects borrowed from several encyclopaedic museums across the world, which will remain on display in Mumbai for three years.

Through an equally robust educational offer, the gallery will invite history teachers in schools and colleges to teach with objects, forging a new kind of partnership between museums and universities.

The project is supported through Getty's Sharing Collections Programme.

11. Will there be any international academic collaboration?

Yes. CSMVS is partnering with the Cambridge Global Humanities Project **at the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge** to develop a University Academic Programme which will be attended by over 20 Indian university faculties and their students.

12. Are there digital and outreach components?

Yes. The project will include a dynamic website, multilingual audio guides, short expert films, and travelling micro-exhibitions via the **Citi-CSMVS Museum on Wheels**, extending impact to rural India.

13. How can you know more about the objects on display in the gallery?

A set of 41 highlight objects has been collated for reference. Members of the Press are encouraged to ask for a guided tour of the gallery with the curators to understand the project better and write on specific aspects of its narrative.