

The journey unveiled



Dignitaries inaugurating the exhibition

Maps, manuscripts and photographs, mostly clicked by Hungarian-British explorer Aurel Stein, who is credited with the unearthing of a civilisation from under the Taklamakan desert on the Silk Road, is on display at the show called *Fascinated by the Orient* at IGNCNA.

Taking cue from the successive conquests of Alexander the Great, Stein is believed to have developed interest in what happened to the Greek culture, as Alexander's army penetrated into Afghanistan, Turkestan and finally into India.

The ongoing exhibition at the Indira Gandhi National centre for Arts, documents the adventures of Stein across central Asia through an array of photographs, mostly by Stein himself.

There are about 10 dedicated boards illustrating the explorer's interest of the Orient, his family education background and some of his notable expeditions including the Central Asian, Iranian and the Archaeological Survey of India, she says.

The exhibition is a miniature version of an earlier one hosted in Honk Kong which had almost 176 pictures vis-a-vis 100 odd pictures in this one.

Salman Haider, Former Indian Foreign Secretary, and Former India's High Commissioner to India inaugurated the exhibition



along with Szilveszter Bus, Hungarian Ambassador to India. Calling the project evocative, Haider pointed out the huge cultural diaspora from India that it displays.

Haider also upheld the objective of the exhibition to provide an opportunity for scholars to initiate collaborative research on analogous collection besides getting acquainted with Stein's understanding of great civilizations like those of India, China and Central Asia.

"We have had the benefit of being the repository of rich collection of artifacts from Central Asia and I encourage all to see what India possesses," he says.

Stein has been described as "prodigious combination of scholar, explorer and geographer and archaeologist" His name and works have become inseparable from the history of the Silk Road,

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which provided the opportunities for him to work in areas where he could make best use of his knowledge and expertise.

Born in Budapest in 1862, Stein studied Sanskrit, Old Persian, Indology and philology at universities of Vienna, Leipzig and Tubingen. From 1888 onwards he served as registrar of Punjab University and principal of the Oriental College, Lahore and principal of the Calcutta Madrasah. Stein joined the Archaeological Survey of India in January 1904.

Many artefacts that Stein collected during his forays are now divided between the Srinagar Museum, the National Museum in Delhi, the British Museum and the British Library. Budapest is scheduled to remain open till April 10. PTI

which was not merely an Eurasian trade route linking China with the Mediterranean, but a conduit of ideas, beliefs, styles of art and technologies.

From 1887 Stein lived in India making his knowledge available in his adopted country, Britain,



Works on display