



In Pursuit of the Past: Collecting Old Art in Modern India circa 1875-1950

By Pratapaditya Pal

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1. A significant development in the period from the late 19th to the first half of the 20th century was the awakening of national pride, with an increased awareness in India's ancient heritage. The explorations of the ASI unearthed several treasures of the past; in addition, the dwindling fortunes of princely families led to their disposing of their possessions. As a result, individuals from wealthy and educated Indian families, as also enlightened European visitors and residents, zealously acquired objects of historic and aesthetic appeal. Today these works, preserved in museum or private collections in India and abroad, provide rich materials for the study of India's art history. This book presents the stories of the pioneering collectors and traces the journey of great works of art, as collections were sold or gifted away. Many of the 20th-century collectors were personally known to the author, and he has also mined the memoirs of scholars, collectors and dealers to reveal little-known facts about how they came to acquire some of their prized pieces.

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