

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1774
ANSWERED ON 22/12/2022

SMUGGLING OF IDOLS OF DEITIES

1774. Shri Kartikeya Sharma

Will the Minister of CULTURE
संस्कृति मंत्री
be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware that a large number of costly and antique items like idols of various deities were smuggled to foreign countries under the British Rule;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;
- (c) the steps taken to ensure their safe return from foreign countries;
- (d) whether India had any accord with any foreign countries on the repatriation of the same; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the details of such items returned to India so far?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE, TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION
(SHRI G. KISHAN REDDY)

(a) & (b) Antiquarian wealth has been looted in various time periods from India. Unambiguous data in this regard is however unavailable.

(c) Government of India is committed to bring back antiquities of Indian origin which were stolen from our country. Whenever any antiquity of Indian origin surfaces in any location abroad, ASI takes up the matter with Embassies/ Missions abroad through MEA, for their retrieval.

(d) & (e) As such, India has no accord with any foreign countries for repatriation of antiquities. However, India is a signatory to The UNESCO Convention of 1970, along with 142 other countries. This Convention deals with “Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of Cultural Property”.
So far, 242 antiquities have been retrieved from various countries, out of which 229 antiquities were repatriated from 2014 till date.
