



Standing figure of the Bodhisattva Maitreya

On display

Title/Description: Standing figure of the Bodhisattva Maitreya

Born: 0800 c.

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Bronze

Measurements: h. 229 x w. 74 x d. 52 mm

Accession Number: 675

Historic Period: 9th century

Production Place: Asia, India, Kashmir

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1978

As Mahayana Buddhism merged with Hindu ideas, Buddhist saints, or *Bodhisattvas*, appeared in art. These sympathetic beings, full of wisdom and compassion, were well established by Kushan times, but increased in popularity when Tantric ideas developed. Bodhisattvas were Buddhas-to-be who, having reached the stage of enlightenment, chose to delay Nirvana so they could help others along the Eightfold Path. The Bodhisattva Maitreya (or Buddha-of-the-Future) was one of the early Bodhisattvas and remained important in this Tantric period. It was believed that Maitreya would come to save the devout. He was related to the Buddhist Heavenly Father, *Amitaha*, who appeared in Gupta times and gained popularity as the concept of *bakti*, or devotion to a personal god, spread.

This standing statue is thought to show Bodhisattva Maitreya. As is usual with Bodhisattva statues, he is shown dressed in the princely robes and jewels of Prince Siddhartha and wearing his sacred thread. His right hand is in the *virada mudra* (boon-conferring gesture) and he has the Buddhist wheel on his palm. The water vessel in his left hand is typical of Maitreya but the central pattern in his head-dress does not seem to be the Stupa normally shown in Maitreya statues.

Description taken from the 'Art From The Indian Sub-Continent In The Sainsbury Centre' catalogue by Margaret A. Willey (Sainsbury Centre, UEA, 1995).
