



## Roundtable and Book Forum

Vidya Dehejia, *The Thief Who Stole My Heart: The Material Life of Sacred Bronzes from Chola India, 855–1280* (Princeton, 2021).

Daud Ali (U-Penn), Nachiket Chanchani (U-Michigan), and Sugata Ray (UC Berkeley) in conversation with Vidya Dehejia (Columbia).

This inaugural event celebrates the release of Prof Dehejia's book *The Thief Who Stole My Heart: The Material Life of Sacred Bronzes from Chola India, 855–1280* (Princeton, 2021), drawn from her Andrew Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (2016). The roundtable discussion will see Daud Ali, Nachiket Chanchani, and Sugata Ray in conversation with the author on the book's contribution to the study of temple cultures in premodern worlds.

### About the book:

From the 9th through the 13th century, the Chola dynasty of southern India produced thousands of statues of Hindu deities, whose physical perfection was meant to reflect spiritual beauty and divine transcendence. During festivals, these bronze sculptures—including Shiva, referred to in a saintly vision as “the thief who stole my heart”—were adorned with jewels and flowers and paraded through towns as active participants in Chola worship. In this richly illustrated book, leading art historian Vidya Dehejia introduces the bronzes within the full context of Chola history, culture, and religion. In doing so, she brings the bronzes and Chola society to life before our very eyes. Dehejia presents the bronzes as material objects that interacted in meaningful ways with the people and practices of their era. Describing the role of the statues in everyday activities, she reveals not only the importance of the bronzes for the empire, but also little-known facets of Chola life. She considers the source of the copper and jewels used for the deities, proposing that the need for such resources may have influenced the Chola Empire's political engagement with Sri Lanka. She also investigates the role of women patrons in bronze commissions and discusses the vast public records, many appearing here in translation for the first time, inscribed on temple walls.

**Vidya Dehejia** is the Barbara Stoler Miller Professor of Indian and South Asian Art at Columbia University. She is the author of many books, catalogues, and essays on the cultural and intellectual history of India. In the course of her career, she has combined research with teaching and exhibition-related activities around the world. For her exceptional contributions to art and education, she was awarded the Padma Bhushan Award by the Indian Government in 2012.