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# Evolution of Museums in Indian Metros: Special Concern to National Museum, Delhi

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**ABSTRACT:** Museums are institutions which can help people increase their power of observation, to acquaint people towards their art and culture and to preserve their own heritage. With regard to the development of Museum in India, from 19<sup>th</sup> century this evolution has been begun to take shape. There are different factors which helped the growth of museums in India such as interest of Britishers towards museums, support of local rulers to enhance the art and culture of India, attention of philanthropic societies and the formation of archaeological survey of India. Museums are monuments which preserve a country's past glory. In India national museum of Delhi, the first ever established museum in India, Indian museum Kolkata and CSMVS Mumbai are some of the eminent museums.

**KEYWORDS:** Renaissance, antiquities, archaeological sites, proto-history, sculptures, anthropology, miniature painting.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Museums: An interpretation

During the 9th to 12th centuries of the Middle Ages of European history, museum stood as the 'House of Relics'. Its main function was the preservation and the saturation of relics of saints who played an important role in the political and cultural life of the day. In other words, the relics of the important saint during the Middle Ages in Europe were the objects of exceptionally intensive the sacral activity governing the political and cultural life of the people. Hence the relic was the key to understand the surrounding world. The Christian Church which relied on the dogmatic religious ideology used these houses of relics for religious purposes and thereby influenced the masses.

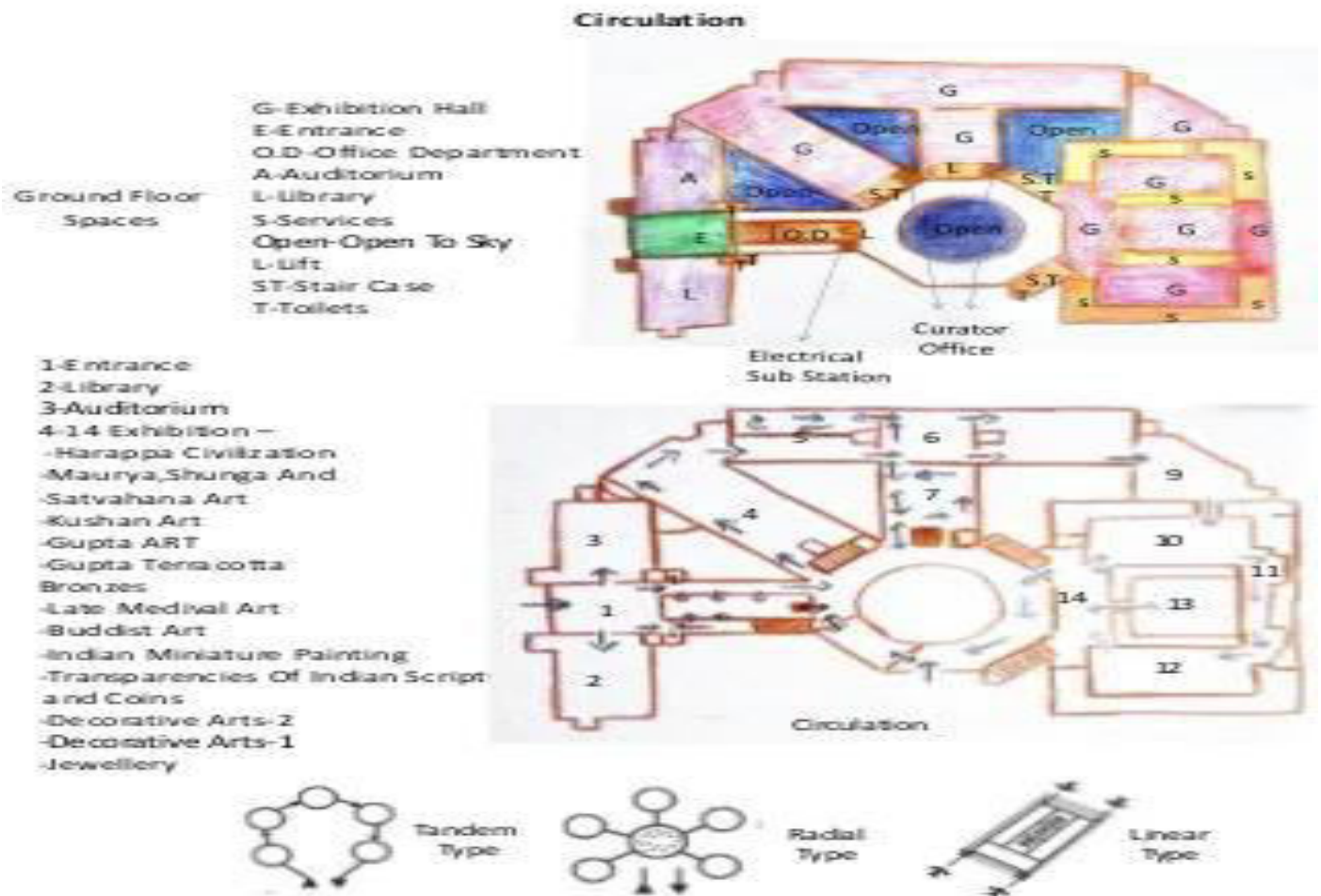
Even in Asia, such early social institutions did exist to keep the collective memory of people alive. In India, a stupa, containing the bodily relics of Buddha, was an embodiment of sacredness and spiritual value. The relics of the Buddha were collected and preserved inside the stupa which gave it the social status and sanctity. A stupa also acted as a treasure house because it treasured the most precious objects viz, relics of the Buddha. It also acted as the Mirror to reflect the moral and social values of the time. A magnificent structure viz., stupa was built suiting to valuable contents. Thus, the stupa like a modern museum collected the valuable items in the form of relics of the Buddha; it conserved these objects and ultimately passed on the message to its devotees who flocked there from far off region and lands. The tradition emanating from these provided social norms to govern the socio religious aspects of the society. Hence a stupa realizing the similar social objectivity was an earlier manifestation contacting back the social reality and providing the traces of theoretical museology in India even as early as in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

The era of Renaissance, from 14th to 16th century A.D. marked qualitatively a new change in the history of museum movement. Increased interest in social and natural objects, representing scientific knowledge, were of special interest to the neo-rich class of the changing society. The growing demand for curios (Latin 'curiositas' meaning thirst for knowledge) and rarities (Latin 'raritas' viz., rare things) gave rise to big collections of authentic objects. The love for universal collection of art objects and natural curiosities necessitated a new organization. The term 'museum' for a collection was first introduced in the late 15th century. The search for rare cultural and natural objects gained momentum soon after Renaissance. The chambers housing art curiosities and natural objects were new kind of institutionalized museum phenomenon, which for all its variety was in essence a form of museum. The situation changed in the late 18th century as the classical age crumbled under the pressure of an emerging industrial world which considered a classical antique to be an object as the material source and producer of knowledge. The numerous archaeological discoveries brought out by the archaeologists and historians became irreplaceable testimonials that alone could reveal the secrets of bygone ages.

With regard to the development of Museum Movement in India, there are four major factors which helped the growth of museum and the museum movement in India. Firstly, the British Civil Servants in India, who had seen museum movement in their own country, gave an enthusiastic lead. Secondly a whole-hearted support was given by the local rulers and the nobility to foster Indian art and culture. Thirdly the collections of the learned, philanthropic societies were donated to form the nucleus of big museums. Lastly the emergence of Archaeological Survey of India strengthened the movement by opening site museums at a number of excavated sites.

## II. AREA OF STUDY

The study of different museums included in this research paper particularly National Museum of Delhi which is located at Delhi, the capital of India is an important museum related to different kind of artefacts.



PLAN OF NATIONAL MUSEUM, DELHI, image courtesy: google

## III. METHODOLOGY

The historical and observation methods were implemented in the present study. Various referred books, reports and articles were examined to study the background or historical evidences of museums, evolution of museums in India, categories of museums, their artefacts, the galleries, some eminent museums in India etc.



#### IV. CATEGORIES OF MUSEUMS

According to the ICOM Statutes, Article 3, Section 1: "A Museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the Service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (ICOM Definition of a museum 2007). Museums are monuments which preserve a country's past glory. Museums are no longer just Ajayabghara - storehouses of Curious housed in old grey buildings. They have the potential to be a living emblem of our rich and varied heritage. Provided we create the right environment for them to Flourish. Museums are institutions which can help people Increase their power of observation in order to look beyond The diversities that characterize all the creations of nature as well as of man and derive knowledge and pleasure from the same.

The old concept of museums as storehouses of curios and Antiquities has long been abandoned and museums are now Recognized as institutions of considerable importance, Encompassing a wide variety of ideas and information to be Gained in an easily comprehensible manner.

There are some important categories of museums like:

- National museums
- State museums
- Archaeological site museums
- Memorial museums
- Specialized museums run by departments of the Central and state governments
- Science museums/centres
- University museums
- Natural science museums
- Museums run by trusts and private bodies

#### V. MUSEUMS IN INDIA: BACKGROUND

The origin of museums in India goes back to late eighteenth century, although references to chitrashala (picture gallery) can be found in ancient Indian literature (literature of Kalidasa, Ramayana, Mahabharata etc.). Ancient and medieval Indian literature is full of such terms like Alekhyagriha, 'vithi', and 'Chitrasala' etc. which stand for galleries, housing paintings, sculptures and terra-cotta. These were however the royal museums where; ordinary people had no access.

The various Sanskrit plays, like, Pratima by Bhasa and Naishadha Charita of Sri Harsha belonging to 12th century A.D. respectively speak of the permanent and mobile exhibition galleries attached to the royal courts. permanent and mobile exhibition galleries attached to the royal courts. The audio-visual shows and pata-chitras (scroll paintings) were intended basically for public enjoyment and instruction, one of the important functions of the modern museum. Today, there are over 150 Mesolithic rock art sites have been found in various part of India, especially Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh, which itself presents a long gallery of pictures mainly concerned on animal figurines.

The Sitabenga and Jogi Mara caves on Ramgarh hill, in Chhattisgarh can also be considered as picture gallery or a picture museum. There are also records of royal antiquarians who collected objects of curiosity to embellish their palaces. Feroz Shah Tughlaq (AD 1351-1388) brought two colossal Ashokan pillars from distant places and established them at Delhi, his capital. The walls of the temples in medieval India narrating various facets of life, society and nature showed that Indians were not only highly skilled in various art forms but also in displaying them. In 1814, the royal Asiatic Society was able to establish a museum in Calcutta, which is also referred as Imperial Museum at Calcutta in colonial accounts, with Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish botanist, as its first curator. This was the first museum in India and after that different kind of museums have opened in India.

In India, nowadays there are several vast museums existed in Metro cities like National Museum, Delhi, Indian Museum, Kolkata and state museum like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vaastu sangrahalaya (formerly the prince of Wales Museum of Western India), Mumbai.

**VI. NATIONAL MUSEUM, DELHI-**

The National Museum, New Delhi, founded after Independence, laid on 12 May 1955.

The collection:

The museum owned around 2, 00,000 samplings of exquisite art, both Indian and foreign. This collection is concerned to our rich and composite cultural heritage that dates back to more than five thousand years.

The museum has a rich assemblage of- a. Protohistory - artefacts which has been recovered from sites like Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro (Pakistan), Jhukar, Jhangar, Amri, Nal, etc.



b. A collection of sculptures- remarkable pieces of sculpture ranging from the time of Ashoka's reign (third century BC) to the Late Medieval period. Some other splendid work of sculpture such as the standing Buddha, a Bacchanalian scene from Mathura, a viilyadhara couple from Ai hole, an inscribed image of Yaksha from Pitalkhora, Maharashtra, etc.



c. Other important collections include terracotta figurines from Harappan sites figurines from Ahichchhatra, Kausambi, Kondapur, Nalanda, etc., besides textiles and Persian and Arabic manuscripts. Figurines of river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna recovered from Ahichchhatra are the largest terracotta sculptures found in India and are the proud possessions of this museum.

The museum has a rich collection of miniature paintings, particularly of the Rajput and Pahari schools. A magnificent collection of central Asian antiquities was also transferred to this museum by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Pre-Columbian art from Mexico is another excellent collection here and is only one of its kind.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The origin of museums in India goes back to late eighteenth Century, but we get plenty of evidences that shows the origin of museums in India from pre-historic period such as a long gallery of " Bhimbetka" but, as time passed development of museums in India occurred in different places with the support of locals as well as Britishers. Though there are abundance of museums in India nowadays, but a fewer are important from the point of artefacts, structures, galleries and the place where they are situated. National museum Delhi, is one of them. the museum owned around 2, 00,000 samplings of exquisite art, both Indian and foreign. This collection is concerned to our rich and composite cultural heritage that dates back to more than five thousand years.

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