



## GUJARAT MUSEUMS: PRESENT SITUATION AND USEFULNESS IN SOCIAL LEARNING

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**ABSTRACT** The museums have to carry intention to play a lively role not only in collecting and preserving the art and culture of a particular region or community but also in presenting the social and cultural development of mankind by way of exhibiting the original evidence of man's creative genius and his control over nature. Thus, in the modern context museum ceases to be personal passion and becomes a public property that a culture or community holds as general possession and people of that land or community may derive benefits from it. The concept of museum marks a clear shift from personal to public and museums today are no more personal collection but public organization of art of culture. Museum in this new sense becomes movement. It is something that moves ahead and pushes forth to progress. It becomes movement through purpose of education. Museums in India operate today as active movement. Museums in general are considering improvement and they seek earnestly to achieve them. It can be said that "a museum profession is in the process of formation".

**KEYWORDS :** Public Organization of Art, Nonprofit permanent Institution, Arranges original Exhibits, Growth of Museums,

### Introduction:

Museums have to educate people for interpretation and use of the material so that this learning proves useful bringing advantages to a modern society. It is the utility of the collection for the purpose of learning and progress of mind that acquires priority for museums.

Nonprofit permanent Institution, The collection and preservation remains elementary functions of museums the educational quality achieves greater prominence. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has approved this definition of museum that says: A non-profit permanent institution, in the service of society and its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for the purpose of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment (2001, 12)

### Importance of study

Arranges original Exhibits, A museum collects and arranges original exhibits and carefully presents them so that they tell their own story. A museum with progressive view would allow its exhibits to outline a story of their genesis, growth and relevance for their culture and community. This story becomes a means to impart education about that culture and community. Such a museum is actively involved in an endeavor to present a coherent story of its contents. This story imparts direct instructions to visitors and stimulates their interest to learn more through seeing and experience. To achieve this objective, the museums must collect, preserve and interpret the past and it has to correlate it with modern tendencies and enlighten and entertain people of all the sections of the society. Thus, museum today has to become, as Nigam (1985) puts it, "a workshop where things are done; a school where things are taught; an academy of higher learning and a place of cultural enjoyment where visitors may relax from monotony of everyday life, hard work, and personal anxieties and where they may seek wider horizons".

Cultural Heritage: The museum movement in India exhibits all round growth with having all sorts of museums covering almost all important aspects of human knowledge, such as history, archaeology, art, ethnology, natural history, health agriculture, transport and applied sciences, etc. The idea that works behind it is to preserve our cultural heritage and promote better understanding of it. Efforts were made to make public conscious to their precious cultural heritage and to know its value. In these efforts money, means of transport and communication and human efforts were put to effective work to generate cultural consciousness and awareness among people and as the development took place in these fields the development became rapid and more widespread. Museum took-out useful publications keeping in mind various cultural, educational and academic purpose along with new researches done by museum officials aware to people and students. Thus, education about cultural history imparted effectively through museums addressing to the Indian needs and conditions. Thus museums serve them as effective academic, workshop and laboratory of higher learning.

In ancient India, the system of education operated through sculptures, paintings, symbols etc. Swarnakamal informs about the genesis of museums in India in his book, Museums in Gujarat (1986). He traces back the genesis of museums in India to a tradition of Chitrashala (Gallery of Art) and the 'Pratima Mandir' (temple of sculpture) that are described in the ancient Indian literature and religious writings. In those days, these ancient institutions probably served the purpose of the 'Museums' in nucleus form. The history witnessed cultural advancement. Particularly, the Indus Valley civilization flourished to its fullest. In the ancient times, the University of Taxila operated in its fullest bloom as centre of cultural advancement.

Growth of Museums: The growth of museums in India was well-known prior to 1890. The Indian Museum at Calcutta was established in 1814, and by 1888 more than twenty museums were existing in different cities of India. He calls museum "institution of higher education" and informs that the idea of museum activities got the impetus in 1887 during the Jubilee of Queen Victoria (Mehta, 1995: 3). In Gujarat, museums, art galleries and cultural institutions vary widely ranging from those collections of regional, national and international importance to those comprising only one or two rooms, small individual exhibitions and so called 'Memorial rooms'.

The first museum was established in Gujarat in Bhuj as early as 1877 as a part of the school of art by the then ruler of Kuchchh, Maharao Khengarji III. Then after museum movement in Gujarat took a dynamic turn as a result of special interest taken by the ruler of the important Princely states of Saurashtra and Gujarat on the occasion of the celebration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887. The celebration of Queen Victoria ushered in a new era of growth and development of several museums not only in Saurashtra and Gujarat but also in other parts of British India. In Saurashtra the Watson Museum Rajkot was established at that time. This was followed by the museums at Baroda in the old Baroda state, at Junagadh in the old Junagadh state and at Dharampur in the old Dharampur state. The process of setting up museums was in progress in the former princely states of Gujarat. Municipalities, educational institutions and literary institutions of some big cities and towns also made considerable efforts to build museums. The museums at Jamnagar, Prabhas Patan, Ahmedabad came in to existence after 1945. It refers to development of museums in Gujarat in the PostIndependence Period and seems that Gujarat has the largest number of museums as compared to other neighbouring states in north and central India and that "The museum movement of Gujarat received strong impetus after the formation of the Gujarat State in 1960.

In the time subsequent to the British Rule, the museum movement took a different shape. In the Independent India, the influence of princely states became less visible. With it, a new era began in the history of the museum movement in Gujarat. It began with a museum at Himatnagar in the former Idar state in the year 1933. The archaeological movement started in the country at the beginning of the twentieth century. It

created a lot of interest and enthusiasm in the minds of people. As a result, many excavations were undertaken. With it, people knew the value of material that was excavated. They felt a need of a suitable building to house those precious materials. Museums, thus, served an immediate solution to the problem of housing the materials. P. A. Inamdar (nd) informs in his report titled, "Some Archaeological Finds in the Idar State" that "Specimen of old time images and sculpture's art are rescued from old ruins and are kept in the museums at Himatnagar". U. P. Shah (nd) informs in his report, "Sculptures from Shamlaji and Roda" that "Unfortunately, however, this museum had to be closed down for want of funds in the year 1953 and the collections of the Himatnagar Museum were transferred to the custody of the Baroda museums under the orders of the former Bombay Government".

Likewise, another museum came up at Amreli in 1934 as an outcome of the efforts of Prataprai C. Mehta. The Archaeological Department of the Baroda state conducted excavations at Gohilwad Timbo, a site near the town and as a result many interesting antiquities of historical and archaeological importance were unearthed. With these modest collections Prataprai started a modest museum by displaying the collections, and in a small room adjoining the Public Library. The collections included beautiful and well proportionate terracotta, figures of gods, human beings, animals and pottery fragments with decorated designs. Roman type red polished pottery fragments, toys, goldsmith's dice, carved pieces of conch bangles, beads of different shapes, grinding stone of Maurya polish, coins of Kshatrapa and Gupta periods too made the collections. These collections date back from the 1st century to 4th century A. D. The pottery handles speak of the flourishing business relations with the Roman Empire and the grinding stone with Maurya polish dates back from 3rd to 2nd century B. C. This museum that came up basically as a result of archaeological collections does not find a mention in the reports of Markham and Hargreaves for no obvious reasons. One more museum came up at Jamnagar in 1946 with an urge for housing antiquities. Objects of Natural History are recently added to the collection at the museum.

Then, there followed a phase of "Institutional Museums". In 1946, the B. J. Medical College Museum was set up. It marks the beginning of the third phase. The history of the Institutional Museums marks one thing about them that research conducted at such institutions necessitated extensive field work and accumulation of material. It was always essential to find a place to store or house the materials either during the research or on completion of it. Research work carried out constantly swelled up the collections of such material and as ultimate result a museum is set up. As a second side to it, some institutions felt a need to use the original materials for the purpose of classroom teaching and study. Later, students required that material for study outside the classroom. Hence, a need was felt to house this material. While the former cause was more applicable to archaeology and history museums and other science museums, the latter cause worked mainly behind establishment of medical museums of Pathology, Anatomy, Hygiene, etc. On these considerations, a medical museum was established at the B. J. Medical College, Ahmedabad in the year 1946. The museum is dedicated to the subjects like pathology, anatomy, hygiene, pharmacology and such other subjects that are covered under the syllabus for the studies in medicine.

**Institutional museums:** The institutional museums are different from other public museums in the sense that they are dedicated to a specialized field of studies and quite a lot of preliminary knowledge on the subject is covered by museum's collection. It is presupposed on the part of those who use it. It has direct influence on the presentation of material, labeling, etc. There is no rigid law about it. It has to go as per the requirement of studies. The Calico Museum of Textile serves a better example of it. The idea of setting up this museum was first conceived by Dr. Anand Coomarswamy. It was inaugurated in 1949 by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. It is the first museum in India that displays modern designs with modern display methods. It is the first institution to take up the study of Indian textiles both from technical and historical points of view. And it is the first museum really to envisage a visual education starting from fundamentals and to apply this lesson to the actual economic and technological conditions in India today, taking into consideration the different possibilities both of handicraft and machine loom.

Further, the year 1949 witnessed rise of three museums in Gujarat: the

first was the Calico Museums of Textiles at Ahmedabad, the second was the Medical College Museum at Baroda and the third was the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalay at Sabarmati, Ahmedabad. The Medical College Museum at Baroda was designed on the framework of the B. J. Medical College Museum, Ahmedabad. However, the third museum that is Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalay at Sabarmati was attributed to other kind of reason. It was basically a personality museum built with a motive to establish a memorial at places that were closely associated with the life and works of Mahatma Gandhi. The museum marked an attempt to display how Gandhi lived and worked.

There was another museum set up by the Department of Archaeology of the M. S. University of Baroda at Vadodara in 1950. The department collects various kinds of objects excavated from various archaeological sites in Gujarat. The other two institutional museums of the kind are one at Prabhas Patan and the other was the Maharaja Fatehsingh Museum at Baroda. The first was set up in 1951 basically to house the collections from the site of old Somnath temple which was excavated by A. S. I. to establish the history of the ancient Somnath temple.

In the post-Independence period, several municipalities came forward to initiate and encourage museum activities. The Baroda Municipality was the first to set up a Health Museum at Baroda in 1953. Four years later the Ahmedabad Municipality set up a Cultural Centre in the city in the year 1956. The museum is the only one of the kind. The Cultural Centre at Ahmedabad had different purpose to serve. The instinct with which the Ahmedabad Municipality started the idea of Cultural Centre was, however, quite different. This Culture Centre was to feature an educational museum

That would supplement conventional learning with comprehensive visual instruction. The aims of the museum were to make it a social institution that brings about active participation of the people in a relational exposition of cultural phenomena expressed primarily in visual terms.

The Maharaja Fatehsingh Museum at Vadodara was perhaps the last museum with a royal patronage and to house material exclusively from the royal collections. It was with unparalleled dedicated efforts put in by the royal Gaekwads. In setting up this museum the Gaekwad sought counseling from foreign specialists and accumulated precious collection from various foreign origins such as European paintings, European, Greco-Roman and modern Indian sculptures, pieces of Chinese and Japanese art and modern Indian paintings.

One more museum that needs a mention is the B. J. Research Institute's Museum at Ahmedabad

In addition to the museums mentioned above, there are several departmental museums that too find no specific mention. These are predominantly the museums set up by the various departments of the universities for the purpose of education and research. At the University of Baroda, for instance, the departments like the Botany, Zoology, Geology, museology, Geography etc. work consciously at developing museums to suit their purposes. They turn out to be inevitable sections in the departments.

### Conclusions:

As regards the tendencies of the history of museums Markham and Hargreaves remark in their "Report on the Museums in India" (1936), "Thus, in short the Indian museums have a quadruple origin - firstly, the governments and their European servants established scientific museums at the great centres of government, and secondly, the Indian states have to some extent follow this example; thirdly, the Archaeological Survey has developed a dozen local - museums, and fourthly, teaching institutions and learned societies have created museums to suit their own special requirements" (1936: 19).

Museums as such remained a part of cultural activities during all times since the ancient period. The seeds of art and culture that were laid down at that time were nurtured by kings and princes who lived then after. Thus, it took a shape of personal collection of art pieces and precious and exquisite objects of curiosity. But it chiefly remained activity under the royal patronage and a common man was not allowed a glimpse of it. This collection being precious and exquisite was put under strong guards and safety to save it from pilferage. Thus, museum activities remained in those times a part of royal hobby. Majority

museums we find today are the ones that come down to us mostly from royal collection and they serve as valuable heritage and documents to project and explain the history of the respective time.

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#### Brochures,

Brochures published by different government museums in Gujarat:

1. Museum and Picture Gallery, Vadodara
2. Watson Sangrahalaya, Rajkot
3. Darbar Hall Museum, Junagadh
4. Barton Sangrahalaya, Bhavnagar
5. Lakhota Museum, Jamnagar
6. Prabhas Patan Museum, Prabhas Patan
7. Chhota Udepur Sangrahalaya
8. Archaeological Museum, Jamnagar
9. Sardar patel Museum, Bardoli
10. Lady Wilson Museum, Chhota Udepur