



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Arts

## MUSEUMS: THE NECESSITY FOR THE SOCIETY

**KEY WORDS:** Valuable source of reference, Symbol of civilization, Beauty and Melody, Non- formal education, Pride and Glory,

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper shall focus on the meaning of the word 'museum' and its evolution from personal activity as hobby to a level of institution that claims value. In this light, the chapter shall present a historical review of how museums evolved with the history. It will review the situation in the present that marks a shift in politics from autocratic kingship to a democratic form of political community that emerged in almost every state over the world. With it, a drastic change has occurred in people's thinking and attitude about museums.

**Introduction:**

Museums serve as potent sources to tap variety of source material that has potency to influence. Influence of museum works powerfully on young minds. It spurs in them imaginative capability and capacity to understand the value of objects in this world. Various sources of history are collected, presented and displayed at various museums in Gujarat. They can be summarized as under:

- The sources of Indian History: literature, both religious and secular, Vedangas and Upvedas, Sutras, Purans, Buddhist and Jain literature, Epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata .
- Archaeological sources like stone tools, pottery, terracotta, sculptures, paintings and other antiquities.
- Inscription on rocks, coins, seals etc.
- Collection related to anthropology of tribal interest. (Both pre and protohistory)
- Specimens representing various aspects of Natural History specimens
- Relics of pre-historic and proto-historic times
- Historical remains of Pre Mughals, Rajputs, Later Rajputs, Later Mughals and British India and leed native states. Exceptional collection of art facts from civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan and Indonesia
- Picture Gallery houses valuable collection of European oil paintings
- European room shows art from early Greece to the 20 th century.

These sources reflect on wide ranging subjects like Archaeology, History, Art-History, Anthropology, Ethnology, Social Science, Botany, Geology and Zoology, Paintings- Textiles, Literature, Religion, Numismatics, Botany, Ornithology, Paleontology, Music (Musical instruments) and the like.

**Important of Study:**

Valuable source of reference, Museums make valuable source of reference material for higher studies and research. Higher studies and research do not operate on bookish knowledge. Knowledge in the form of ideas and abstract thinking, views, assumptions and conclusion needs to be supported with concrete evidences. Museum helps a student pursuing higher studies and a researcher with concrete reference materials to support his/ her assumptions and readings. In this light, museums of various kinds have emerged on the scene. They are textile museum, anatomy museum, weaponry museum, costumes museum, auto museum, atomic museum, planetarium, tribal cultural museum, ethnic museum, anthropological museum, archaeological museum and the like. They make useful appendices to basic research with good photographic illustration, exhibits of monuments and inscriptions and objects as supportive evidences to the point that is made in research.

In a broader perspective, according to Swarnakamal (1986, vii, xi) museum is viewed as "a place where the cultural heritage of our nation is preserved and protected". He says that the cultural

properties of our nation housed in museums must be made available for the good of the greatest number". He further says, "One of the simplest ways of becoming acquainted with the culture, art, history and natural history of any country is by visiting a museum". Museums serve a common platform to people in the present to connect with their past. They do it through delineation of history through objects. Objects on display at museums speak a story of their times. Not only that, they may speak about strengths and weaknesses of past events and peoples. A display at museums serves as a window to cultural heritage of any society and country. It stimulates appreciation of beauty, curiosity and sense of continuity with the past. Swarnakamal (1986, 2) is of the opinion that "Museums of India have much responsibility in this direction. Museums can be of vital significance to a changing society by acting as a bridge between the old and the new. It can hold us to make the best of both worlds.

**Symbol of civilization** Museums are taken as a symbol of civilization. They can be powerful instrument of visual education. They may, thus, serve even as academic media to educate young generations at schools and colleges. They help students to form common and correct understanding about their cultural past. It may also help us to resolve sensitive issues in life holding with sensible approach. On a broader ground, museums help to cultivate collective consciousness. Swarnakamal (1986,1-2) points out in this regard, "A good museum may act as a dynamic agency in cultural and recreational life of the people... a museum affords recreation in education and education in recreation to different sections of community irrespective of any caste, creed, age or aptitude". He also opines that Museums carry a dual purpose of developing aesthetic sense in public and also to make it useful to society, He opines. This kind of thinking about museums may point at value of museums for human community. It is required that it is considered in terms of its potency to inform, impress and improve human attitude and approach. It is a value that seems to be working throughout the world as most countries and communities set up their museums and maintain them with lot of care.

In reference to all such activities in a museum Naqvi (2004) puts his painful remarks about the development of museums in the country. He says "For the past few years, for the purpose of modernizing Indian Museums many private management and marketing firms, display and design agencies, event managers and interpreters and in some cases even corporate and private business establishments are being engaged to do core museum work by some over enthusiastic directors and bureaucratic & ministerial in-charges of museums. I feel this practice is not going to help either in the professional growth and development of existing museums in India or for opening new museums in the country and creating an interest in the Indian public for 'museum experience.' Museum making and managing is a professional job having its own ethics, code of conduct and practice guidelines". He has given importance to the professional training of the personnels working in a museum for the progress of museums in the country. Further in this direction Bhowmik (1988,127) also states "The inception

of museology departments in universities with museums necessitated with the view of better administration and management of museums. But in cases, the relationship between the museology department and museum is not so close, as it was before. And the co-operation and the co-ordination in them is not to the extent of desired requirement.

The history of museums shows that an idea of museum sprang basically from keeping personal collection by kings and royal persons in the past. As a collection relates to a person of eminence in a society or a state it becomes valuable for its people. Personal collection may be a limited range of activity with a common man. But with royal people museum remained an idea that is most needed. The reasons were obvious. Things stored in museum are usually precious, prestigious, exquisite and extraordinary. They possess capability to impress and fascinate beholders and to raise prestige of a person who owns them. It would make them popular with long lasting fame in history. We remember many rulers when we visit and view exquisite collection of their riches. Royal persons like kings, emperors, queens, princes and princesses seemed to be fascinated with this idea of personal glory and pride and also popularity that the collection would bring to them. Hence, they kept their own museums. Kings of almost all states used to maintain royal museums with all cares and fondness.

**Beauty and Melody,** "Museums are part of the response to the needs of human life" says Swarnakamal (1986), the author of Museums in Gujarat. This view relates museums to human life. Though basic needs of human life are realistic comprising of food, clothing and shelter some person hold higher expectations to have comforts in human life. But life becomes beautiful with beauty and melody in it. It becomes even more enjoyable with moments of magic and surprises. One always expects better life, from satisfying to comfortable to beautiful. Beauty and melody help to cultivate aesthetic sense in man. Aesthetic sense may be understood as capacity to know and appreciate beauty and music. It is this artistic sense that fills life with magic and thrill. Museums work potently and yet inherently to cultivate aesthetic sense in man since his childhood. A child's contact with museums through personal or educational visits works powerfully to cultivate in him artistic sense. As a result, a child grows up as human being endowed with capacity to appreciate and enjoy beauty. With it, he gets aesthetic pleasure.

**Non- formal education,** The museum movement seemed to have sprung from an idea of personal museums. Public museums came up as its extension. They work on a wider scale of community. Public museums are usually set and maintained by some organizations or institutions. The purpose is to benefit its members or public in general. Museums stand as common heritage of citizens. It shapes in them collective thinking about their past. Government of a state holds this view when it keeps a museum. This modern view of museums may go against a traditional view of royal museums as a mark of royal glory and pride. In one sense, keeping a museum becomes responsibility on the part of a government in power in the interest of general interest of its people. An idea of royal glory and pride is now treated obsolete as varied interests are seen to be emerging among people of the present time. Museum is now understood as, "a non-profit making, permanent institution, in the service of society and of 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". Further, "Museums are very important institutions devoted to preservation of cultural heritages and also for non-formal education."

Museums work for visitors in a non-formal means of education and lend educational services to other institutions. The project of developing museums in the state of Gujarat takes note of this vital aspect in its policy recommendations. It states, "Collections at museums and acquisition of knowledge through them give more pleasure as compared to education at schools, colleges and

universities. Museums claim a unique place in the cultural fields of the present time. In this respect, museums today need no more be perceived merely as a collection at a scrape dealer's, but it makes a valuable component of education to lead the entire people to a path of progress and cultural living on equal terms, to help them to preserve their cultural heritage and to assign new perspectives to their cultural values" (Maniar, 2000, 6).

**Pride and Glory,** There are fifteen museums at different locations in the state of Gujarat. All of them are government undertaking managed by the Government of Gujarat since the inception of the state in 1961 following its bifurcation from the then Mumbai State. Most of them are a part of the royal heritage that the state received from kings of small indigenous states following their merger with the Union of India. The museums stand as pride and glory of the royal history of Gujarat prior to its independent status as democratic state. It contains in it lot of glamour, glitter and the resultant grandeur with riches and exquisite collection of royal articles and ornaments collected so fondly by them from around the world. They speak of the taste, choice and fascination that those royal persons held. With a view to evoking the royal taste, choice and fascination, the collected objects are arranged for an impressive display so that they may exert similar charm on beholders who visit museums. This spells out significant issues that may go in to keeping and maintaining a museum. They may be laid down as 'Collection', 'Display', 'Maintenance' and 'Management'. A due attention needs to be paid to these issues so that they help to keep a museum fresh and live with update of information.

#### Conclusions:

My research also proposes to focus on this aspect of study and spell out the ways in which museums can be approached correctly and in true spirit. It hopes to open new avenues to allow further study and research to unfold a few more possibilities in the light of dynamism of museums. The paper is tried to introduce the subject of research and the museums in general.

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