Context

Built, Living and Natural

Special Issue on **Museums**

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Journal of the Development and Research Organisation for Nature, Arts and Heritage

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.....Draws on the contemporary

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About the volume

There is a palpable sense around us these days that our museums in India are going to change, that there is an impending Renaissance. This volume attempts to capture the important moment as we prepare ourselves to make the transition to a different kind of a museum dialogue; one that goes beyond just grand buildings housing precious objects. This collection of essays represents the museum in India in all its exhaustive and expansive potential including tangible objects, intangible cultural heritage, urban spaces, communities, performances, collections, archives and life narratives.

The first section on communities brings the focus of the museum back to people's memories, lived experiences and articulation of identities. Troubling events in contemporary India, like the India-Pakistan partition and the Bhopal gas tragedy, raise questions about the promise and perils of museumising contentious events, as written by Urvashi Butalia, Moulshri Joshi and Amritha Ballal. But this conversation also offers us, in India, an opportunity to dismantle the high-culture-low-culture divide prevalent in our museums and forces the museums to engage with difficult narratives.

The traditional notion of a museum has expanded over the decades to include intangible cultural heritage found in oral histories, ethnic identities and urban habitats grappling with change. The demolition and translocation of flower markets of New Delhi marks a loss of cultures built around certain livelihoods, faith and urban lifestyles. This is a culture that is invisibilised by the Indian capital's frenetic march toward becoming a 21st century super-city. The Dastangoi tradition, the Mughal art of storytelling, which has now found an exciting revival is not only an intangible cultural artefact but can also easily tie into the performative teaching techniques in a museum. As Elizabeth Pickard writes, gallery theatre can also be a rich way of facilitating visitors' meaning-making processes.

Indian museums have paid scant attention to visitors' comfort and experience. Visitor studies are only now taking off in India, but Andrew Pekarik warns us that visitors cannot be viewed as passive receptacles. Deepti Mulgund writes about how a new contemporary art museum in a mall frames the visitor in the context of conspicuous consumption. Abha Negi presents the glaring and acute apathy toward visitors in denial of universal access to people with physical, cognitive and developmental disabilities, at historic monuments and museums, and highlights initiatives undertaken to close the gap.

In the past five years, new kinds of exhibition themes such as archival photographs, corporate memory, urban transport infrastructure, manuscripts and newer audiences have presented unique curatorial challenges. Diverse museum audiences visiting Indian exhibitions in the United States present their own set of questions about curator Vidya Dehejia's hybrid ethnic identity and perspective.

Finally, the planning and maintenance of museums, and turning them into efficient and profitable entities requires a wide range of professional expertise. How we train and produce these skilled professionals needs to be constantly reviewed by scholars to bridge the gap between the academia and the industry.

-From the Editorial team

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RAMA LAKSHMI

This volume has been put together at a time of tremendous churning in the museum world. There is a severe crisis in museums in the Western nations; an immediate economic blow that requires urgent attention, and a long-term one that threatens to re-order the fundamentals of the institution itself.

Hit by a massive economic slowdown, museums are facing debilitating cutbacks in state funding like in the United States. Others like Rotterdam's Wereldmuseum, have even been forced to sell their African and American collections to stay afloat.

But beyond the economic woes, the museum institutions are grappling with a more fundamental challenge to their identity and relevance. Through the 1990s, museums have tried to find their niche in an environment where visitors were drawn to other sources of entertainment and amusement parks. Now, in recent years, museums are also struggling to find relevance in a society that has been transformed by the use and access to content and knowledge on the internet, social networking sites and smart phones. The autonomy and the opportunity for articulation that You Tube, Twitter, Facebook, podcasts and other micro-blogging sites offer are unmatched. There is a general suspicion of mediated platforms that offer authoritative, carved-in-stone, meta-narratives.

The reigning mantra these days is 'user-generated-content' that is made possible by these sites. A new book asks if the museum will let go of its historical authority over content in a user-generated world. This question can change the museum in unrecognizable ways in the future. Will these two challenges, economic and social, mean that museums will cede more and more control to private sponsors, visitors and the community?

But closer home in India, we are facing a very different kind of a problem.

It is not from the wired world or a shortage of funds. We are confronted here with an immobilising crisis of imagination. Most of our museums are trapped in an uninspiring sameness; beautiful objects displayed indifferently, stiffly-written labels and ponderous book-on-the wall text panels, lack of storytelling, social context or powerful experiences. There is a complete and unforgivable apathy toward visitor comfort, learning or entertainment. In this uncaring universe, some of the most important narratives about who we are, where we have been, are lost. The unspoken rhetorical code of our museum landscape is: 'Collect it. Display it. Forget it.'

Somehow, having 4000 years of material culture has created in us a sort of a *civilisational arrogance and ennui*. We have the objects, so we do not need to do anything else. Artefacts are labelled, but rarely explained. Stories and experiences are not created around these objects. Coupled with this is the cult of expertise, a sort of Brahminical monopoly over knowledge, a mistaken belief that sharing it or breaking it down for the commoner would diminish its significance and perhaps, even its purity.

To unpack the visual vocabulary of our museums, we must look into its earliest impulses. During the colonial period, our first museum was born from the British excavators' and scholars' decision to store some of the archaeological artefacts in India, instead of shipping them all back to England. After Independence, the Indian government made the museum a handmaiden of its nation-building goal. The museums answered the needs of a newly independent nation's prideful patriotism. Between these storing and patriotic missions, our museums froze. We had wonderful artworks and artefacts but the museums did not communicate powerful and deep human stories.

There is an acute realisation now among almost everybody in India that we have failed to create museums that offer transformative experiences. But, there is also a universal acknowledgement that Indian museums are on the cusp of change and poised for an important leap. As India goes through a second wave of nation-building by means of industrial expansion, high economic growth, urbanisation, farm-to-factory migration, accompanied by disruptive changes in communities, ecology and livelihoods, our museums must prepare to address the difficult social, environmental and cultural anxieties that inevitably follow such deep transition. We must change our existing museums and create new kinds of museums that will reflect not only the transition, but also what we lose and what gets shaped in the process.

In a democracy, it is not always the argument that is important. What is often as important, if not more, is how the argument is conducted. What are the avenues for these troubling social discourses? In contemporary India, the arguments are conducted either in the political arena

or in the media. Both platforms tend to be visceral and rhetorical. As museum professionals, we can work toward gently nudging the Indian museum into the argument by radically re-imagining it as a more constructive, contemplative platform for contested issues.

Our history museums must not freeze our past, they must weave it with our current turmoil, growth and aspirations. Art museums must step away from the obsessive discourse about how much each artwork is auctioned for. Instead, they must unearth stories about artists, where they come from, their caste, their homes, the prevailing power dynamics that their artworks battle and reflect, and what the art tells us about contemporary India's most important arguments. Our science museums must integrate stories about Information Technology growth and how it has shaped cities, communities and the aspirations of the youth. Our tribal museums must go beyond showcasing their craft and culture and celebrating them as singing-and-dancing calendar communities. They must help portray some of the most searing debates that tribal people encounter in India today, around issues of identity, land, resources, development and displacement. While telling these stories, we will be forced to reconfigure the prevalent codes in the elitist, celebratory Indian museums about what stories and objects are museum-worthy. Museums must portray intangible cultural heritage that lie embedded in our people, landscapes, urban settlements, faith and folklore.

For over 200 years, museums have been enduring repositories of the memory of human civilisations and construction of knowledge. The museum's core function of collecting, preserving and displaying have remained constant over the years, but its perceived role has changed over time.

We in India appear to have missed many of the stages of the journey that museums around the world have gone through in the past 60 years: from temples of knowledge, museums slowly moved to becoming informal learning sites that plugged the failures of the school system; then became metaphoric town squares for dissenting dialogues to play out; a safe place for community renewal, where group ideologies are explored and interrogated, to carry out the government's social inclusion missions and to emulating the spectacular set designs of amusement parks. The museum's goal kept shifting from education to social change to tourism to amusement park, to a stage now where visitors may become co-curators. Indeed, museums in the United States invite visitors to upload their own podcast tour of an exhibit. Some websites even run podcasts of alternative curatorial tour of art exhibitions. Some in the museum world talk about the Wiki-model of co-constructing the narrative in a museum.

We have missed many of the stages in the steady evolution of museums witnessed around the world. That is both a crisis and an opportunity. The crisis is that an entire generation of Indians has grown up without experiencing the magic of what our museums could have been. The opportunity is, as is true with all things in India now, we can skip a few generations and leapfrog into the endless possibilities of the future. We do not need to reinvent the wheel in a catch-up game and make the disappointing discovery that by the time we got there, 'the cupboard was bare'[1]. Let us accumulate the combined global learning of the last 60 years in the museum universe and create a new kind of museum that reflects and suits our unique needs today. A museum that is born in and addresses a moment in transition will remain prepared and open for more changes in the future as well. Because even when the artefacts are fixed, the stories around them remain fluid, expanding and ever-changing.

In this age of hyper-communication, how knowledge is generated and shaped is as important as what is said. Museums that offer definitive, last-word narratives may no longer work to capture this moment of transition in India. The user-generated-content mantra, which is being posed as a challenge, actually provides us with the solution to the future of the museum in India. This technology mantra, in the context of the robust, argumentative democracy of ours, suits us perfectly because it allows us to tweak the story constantly.

As a civilisation and a nation-state that is both changing and unchanging, we do not move along a linear trajectory. Notable poet and cultural activist, Ashok Vajpeyi said, we live very comfortably with 'a simultaneity of cultures and eras around us'. So we can use technology effectively to create the kind of museums-fixed, physical, ephemeral, intangible, virtual, oral, moving, performative-that will leave plenty of open spaces for us to re-invent ourselves in the future through our million mutinous arguments.

Note

[1] A famous line from the 1809 English nursery rhyme called Old Mother Hubbard.

Museum and the Community

Bhopal Gas Tragedy
Dissonant history, difficult heritage

MOULSHRI JOSHI AND AMRITHA BALLAL

ABSTRACT

More than 25 years on, almost all issues related to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, from its causes to its fallout and legacy, remain contentious. With a past that is discordant, a present that is divisive, how do we want to remember the legacy of Bhopal in the future? How inclusive is our notion of collective identity when confronted with uncomfortable stories? Who owns memory in a democracy? Through creative participation, the material remains at Bhopal's Union Carbide India site and its intangible legacy has the ability to engage us in dialogue on issues of justice and sustainability. It has the power to bring together the various stakeholders to a common ground to negotiate and construct a shared history.

INTRODUCTION

At the concluding session of 'Bhopal2011 Requiem & Revitalization International Workshop & Symposium'[1], researchers presented their findings after an intensive 10 day workshop in Bhopal that focused on the legacy of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy[2] of 1984. A cross-section of Bhopalis in the audience, including survivors, activists, government officials, artists, former employees of UCIL, journalists, scholars and

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Amritha Ballal is a founding partner at Space Matters and visiting faculty at School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. As an architect and urban planner, Amritha has worked extensively in the field of integrated revitalisation initiatives in India and abroad. Her academic works include 'The City is My Home' (2011) on the spatial dimensions of homelessness in Delhi and she has co-authored 'Planning for Action, Actions for Planning' (NTNU, 2009) on action planning initiatives in Kampala.

Both were part of the Organising Committee of 'Bhopal2011: Requiem & Revitalization International Workshop & Symposium'.

Workshop in action at the former Benazir Palace, an exquisite building with filigree cast iron structure and stained glass windows sharing the historic precinct of Motia Talab. Source: Shiva Rajvanshi, Bhopal2011

other citizens, participated in the proceedings, often engaging in impromptu debates on issues of memory and justice. To an uninformed outsider this may have seemed interesting yet unremarkable. To understand the significance of these interactions one needed to appreciate that 25 years of struggling with the tragedy and its painful, unending aftermath has impacted the city, leaving it fragmented, increasingly locked into unyielding positions, angry, defensive, fatigued or alienated.

Over the years, the discourse on the tragedy has become increasingly limited in scope as it became a distant memory for most of us; from global tragedy, to a country's onus, to a city's burden and now a conflict between 'perpetuators' and 'survivors' of the tragedy.

> This myopic view pushes the Bhopal narrative to the fringes of popular consciousness as an inspiring yet depressing saga of the endless, quixotic struggle of unfortunate victims against immensely powerful forces. In doing so, it exempts the rest of the society from the crucial debate on the global socio-political hierarchies that precluded the tragedy and that have done very little since then to contain its fallout. On the one hand, this leaves the victims vulnerable and isolated in their struggle for justice. On the other, it compromises the legacy of the tragedy and the lessons we can derive from it.
>
> - Ballal (2009)

The political and social divides around the issues relating to the tragedy and a resistance to view sites with contemporary, painful pasts as heritage, need to be addressed as part of the process of transformation of the site into a publicly accessible site for remembrance and empowerment for the local community. 'Bhopal2011 Requiem & Revitalization' provided a platform for discussion, debate and dialogue towards this end by expanding the discourse and contextualising the tragedy within the shared heritage of Bhopal.

Experiences of the authors in Bhopal over the last five years as architects of the proposed memorial for the victims of the tragedy, bring forth a discussion on the challenges faced in memorialising a painful event in the not so distant past, in a society that is still reeling from its aftermath and lacking the formal structures to handle the conflicts and complexities that this site generates.

FROM MEMORY TO MEMORIAL

Olin (1995) states that:

> Memorials are a means by which societies unceasingly shape their pasts. They provide a focus for public commemoration of individual memories, guiding them into channels that serve changing public purposes. The channels are determined and re determined through time in often conflicting negotiations between the authority who authorized, designed, and constructed a memorial, the groups who use it for purposes, and the memorial itself, including changes made to it or to its site.

A memorial commemorating the tragedy and its victims was a long-standing demand of the survivors. In 2005, after 20 years of the tragedy, the state government floated an open national competition for the design of the memorial in Bhopal. The erstwhile Union Carbide Factory where the tragedy unfolded on the night of December 1984 was chosen as the memorial site. Beyond this, the competition brief was open ended leaving the architects free to develop appropriate design interventions for the memorial. The winning proposal for revitalisation of the site by Space Matters was adjudged 'holistic…with an emphasis on creating awareness' (Nevatia 2005). The proposal seeks to physically, notionally and functionally reconnect the site with the city fabric. It seeks to communicate a meaningful and relevant narrative to its visitors by addressing aspects of healing, remembrance and deterrence. The architectural programme and the choice of functions this site must house, were left open to the architect's interpretation by the client. In a contextually loaded site, this decision would be instrumental in determining the sphere of influence and continued relevance of the memorial.

The proposal opened the site to its multiple stakeholders, bringing them into the site as a gesture to reclaim notional and physical territories. The

programme elements that include livelihood generation, public spaces, museums, archives and research facilities, would be instruments that engender their own evolution guided by time and process.

'Bhopal disaster lacks an identifiable symbol that feeds both memory and resistance' (Unknown author 2005). The proposal stresses that the factory structures remain the truest, most evocative and lasting, physical reminders of the tragedy. This valuable heritage and legacy of the structures is preserved in the proposal as the heart of the memorial complex. This characteristic visual domination of the precinct by the factory buildings is retained in the intervention with the new buildings on site being mostly subterranean so as to not compete visually with the factory buildings. 'Opening the site to the city….is to be the memorial's greatest contribution to the city of Bhopal as it seeks to return abandoned industrial landscapes to productive use' (Nevatia 2005).

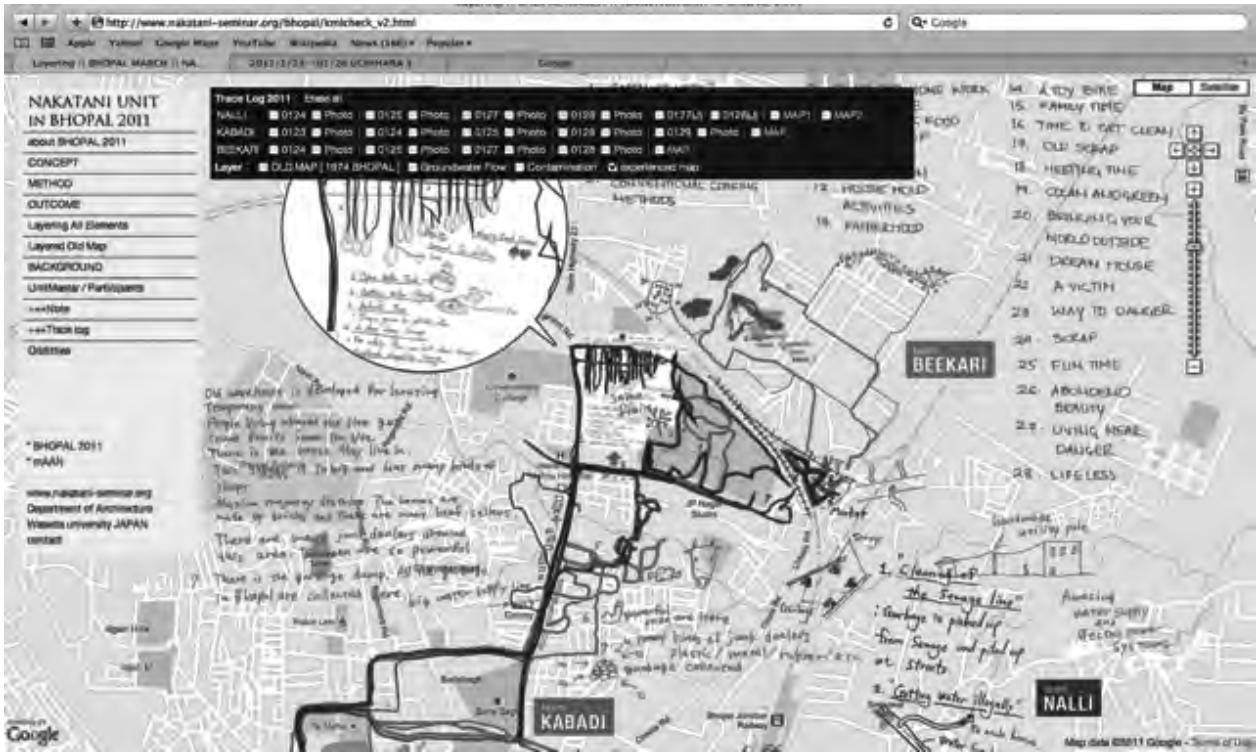
Yet, as Liz Sevcenko (2008) of International Coalition of Sites of Conscience states,

> There is nothing inherent in a site that guarantees it will play the civic role we envision and nothing that precludes it from doing so. Harnessing the latent potential of a site requires the commitment of its stewards to play an active role in engaging its audiences in civic dialogue around contemporary issues.

The overwhelming context of the tragedy along the scarred and contaminated landscape of the factory site posed critical questions about commemoration and about the political act of memorial. The intent of the designers presupposes the supportive structure and stewardship that Sevcenko talks about. Addressing these is integral to the process of placing the memorial in the historic and contemporary discourse while creating an appropriate backdrop for the act of commemoration.

DISSONANCE AND DISCOURSE

Two decades since the disaster, Bhopal had been firmly placed as a metaphor and not only an event. For its victims and sympathisers, the struggle had grown to expand not only medico-legal issues but larger questions of environment and justice. Survivor groups questioned the 'moral right of the government to construct a memorial when it is not able to meet the medical and other needs of the gas victims' (Shaini 2005). Clearly, when accountability for the past and the



Unit 3 explored the concept of landscape as a cultural construct. Participants equipped with GPS devices mapped various existing layers and processes that shape the landscape around the factory. The invisible network of kabadiwallas (waste dealers), bhikaris (beggars) and nallis (drains) were juxtaposed on the physical landscape to understand how its neighbourhood functions

A mid-term review of units' work during the workshop in action. Communication across culture and language was secondary to finding an ideological common ground. Source: Shiva Rajvanshi, Bhopal2011

rehabilitation of the present had not been settled, the appropriation of the future stewardship of the tragedy's legacy was unthinkable.

The question of stewardship itself is a key contention. There are conflicting claims to ownership of the site and by extension to its legacy. The factory site is under the legal ownership of the government. The survivors claim moral ownership to its legacy and hold a critical view of the government's role in the tragedy. The government, elected through a democratic system lays claims acting on behalf of its constituency which includes the survivors. But, as stated by

Old city residents stop by at the Benazir Palace to watch the action at the workshop. Many like Fareed Uddin, a management expert on community health and witness to the tragedy, returned with members of their family to share their perspective with the participants

Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 109), 'democracy guarantees only the existence of a public, not public consensus. Only a strong democracy guarantees the existence of conflict.' Governments, even democratically elected ones, rarely feel secure enough to allow self critical views into the rarefied field of national heritage. 'In a billion-plus democracy enacting out a million mutinies on its streets, people's movements have not made it into the white cube of exhibition walls' (Lakshmi 2011). What Laurajane Smith (2006) refers to as the dominant or 'authorised heritage discourse'[3], is a tool in our democracy to avoid public debate rather than to encourage it.

Furthermore, the prevalent idea of heritage as a privileged notion of age, monumentality and aesthetics has directed the discourse on heritage in India. In Bhopal, this manifests itself in the systemic exclusion of the tragedy site by the heritage establishment, viewed variously as ugly or a reminder of a past some would like to forget. The structures are not recognised as monuments of historic value by the Archaeological Survey of India nor included in heritage walks conducted by various local heritage societies that focus on the more conventional palaces, forts and other monuments. Though ignored within, the factory structures are globally identified with the image of Bhopal and the tragedy that befell it. The survivors of the tragedy have been advocating the recognition of the heritage value of the tragedy site as part of the larger movement to protect the legacy of the tragedy. Their view of the tragedy site as an integral part of Bhopal's cultural heritage has found resistance in many sections of the Bhopal's society which are uncomfortable with the sites painful associations and politically fraught narratives. *'Yeh factory na hamari hai na hi is trasdi mein hamara koi haath hai? Phir kab tak is ko dikha dikha ke hum rote harenge?* (Neither is this factory ours nor the disaster our doing. So how long will we hold on (to the remains of this accident) and cry?)', laments a junior employee at the Bhopal Collectorate, who facilitates permissions to access the restricted site.

In the subjective realm of memory and in the neighbourhood around the factory site, past, present and the future co-exist in a careless disregard. Dense urban development is pushing against the boundary walls of the 2,71,139.3 square metres of abandoned land. The chemicals from factory are leeching into the soil and the groundwater, claiming newer *basti*s (settlements) in the list of '*paani peedit* (water affected)' and 'gas *peedit* (affected)'[4]. How can commemoration deal with this simultaneity? Even

when the claims of the past are settled, who has the moral stronghold to claim access and imagination for the future of Bhopal? How do we, in a democracy, remember our past and what of it do we choose to forget? In the existing scenario, dialogue between various entrenched perceptions on the legacy of the tragedy and its guardianship is the key to arrive at these answers.

MEMORY AS PROCESS

The objective of advocating inclusion of the tragedy's legacy in the common heritage of Bhopal is part of a larger fight for social justice and inclusion. The Bhopal Memorial highlighted the need for 'reformulating the concept of cultural heritage in relation to contemporary power configurations' (University of Gothenburg 2010, p. 3). This presents an opportunity to generate templates and approaches with which the various conflicts and challenges of the site can be negotiated. The Bhopal disaster has a unique international potential as a case study for archaeology of the recent past. It is possible to study both material and immaterial remains of the tragedy to explore how issues of and questions concerning ethics, socio-politics, neo-colonialism and gender are put to the fore in the construct of the Tragedy and its perceptions in society. This exploration is also a potentially powerful democratic asset if people participate in the creation of their own history. According to Sevcenko (2010),

> …heritage is a key terrain on which societal conflicts are expressed. Instead of treating conflict over heritage sites defensively, shielding them from attack, we can take proactive steps to offer heritage sites as resources for addressing contested social questions.

After the competition there was increased awareness on the heritage value of the factories as well as the state of disrepair and imminent threat of dismantling that faced them. In February 2009, survivors of the tragedy along with representatives of concerned civic action groups, the architects of the memorial and heritage experts met Minja Yang, the then Director of the UNESCO office in New Delhi to seek advice on the possible nomination of the tragedy site for inclusion in the World Heritage Sites List. The following are excerpts from the letter presented by the survivor's organisations[5]:

> We believe that it is critically important to preserve and communicate the memory of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal for realizing the possibility of a world free of disasters such as Bhopal. We believe that the structures of the MIC and Sevin plants and few remaining structures are; in the likeness of the remains of the concentration camps at Auswitz and Buchenwald and other places, of tremendous educative value for future generations across the world and therefore must be preserved.

The abandoned Union Carbide factory complex is a play field for the children of the dense neighbourhood. The past, present and future co-exist in careless disregard. Source: Jan af Geijerstam

In 2010, Space Matters joined the International Coalition for the Sites of Conscience to include the UCIL site at Bhopal in the list of 240 like-minded historic sites around the world that advocate and fight to preserve places of memory and use them to spur discussion about the legacies of the past. Sites like the Terezín Memorial, a former Jewish ghetto in Czech Republic; New York's Lower East Side Tenement Museum, a restored tenement building sharing the stories of everyday life of immigrants to the US; and the Villa Grimaldi Peace Park, a former torture and detention centre from the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile are members of the Coalition and though unique in the histories they share, harness the power of their sites to address social justice and human rights issues today.

To view history as a sanitised, linear, celebratory narrative is an insular elitist preserve that inhabits the present and prevents us from engaging with it. For heritage sites to positively engage with the present concerns of the society it is important that 'the building of contextual knowledge is not a limited tool for experts. It turns into a radical tool by the citizens when it is being used to achieve command over their own territory, its heritage and future' (Bjønness 2002).

As part of the efforts to widen the ambit of discussion and involvement with the tragedy site in January 2011, the International Coalition lent its support to

Unit 4 produced an 'Urban Photo Rhizome', a map of 2700 photos by taken by 100 amateur photographers of Bhopal. Attempt was to understand how people of Bhopal see their city and put forward new images of Bhopal to the world. These pictures, as postcards have now reached distant corners of the world. Source: Jonathan Sutanto, Bhopal2011

'Bhopal2011 Requiem & Revitalization' event, which focused on the following themes:

- The issue of remediation of contaminated land and its reuse.
- The analysis and documentation of the site and its interpretation, with emphasis on space as a container of memory and expressions of memory in the public domain.
- The relationship of the site to the surrounding community, looking at heritage as an urban resource with public participation.

The notion that heritage or commemoration must be a territory of trained professionals had to be displaced. Not only the content but the language, location and structure of the conference's engagement had to redefine the concept of 'inclusion'. The multidisciplinary and diverse background of the participants added a creative friction to the process that challenged them to question their own interpretations of the tragedy. The workshop was held in Benazir College, an 18th century palace of the Begum of Bhopal by the lake Motia Talao, sharing the historic precinct with Taj-ul-Masajid and Taj Mahal Palace, now largely abandoned and in a state of disrepair. While the participants worked with the people from the neighbourhood, curious observers from new Bhopal, media and bureaucrats came because they did not want to miss out on any gas tragedy related news.

LEARNING FROM BHOPAL2011

For many of the participants, including those from Bhopal the understanding of the tragedy was initially limited to an incident that occurred 25 years ago. The participants soon realised how far the tragedy still exacts a toll on the environment and psyche of Bhopal. This awareness of the 'many realities of the world' came out of an effort to engage in collaborative and constructive dialogue with the issues in Bhopal. Many participants struggled with the enormity of the issues and the absence of easy answers. Yet, the momentum slowly developed towards evolving a self critical process of enquiry, of finding the right questions, of finding connections where none seemed evident at first. Designed as a space for multiple disciples to work simultaneously on shared concerns, the conference looked to find a structure where the process of commemoration could contribute 'as a catalyst for social catharsis' (Lakshmi 2010).

Shared pasts, shared responsibilities

The event was an opportunity to forge new relationships. Often called the Hiroshima of India, in connecting Bhopal to a distant city's past, the possibility that this analogy can actually contribute to a future agenda had not been explored. Space Matters has been working with the Mayor's office in Bhopal to explore this poignant connection of loss. In the letter of inviting the Mayor of Hiroshima to inaugurate Bhopal2011, the Mayor of Bhopal wrote:

> We feel that tragedies such as Bhopal and Hiroshima blur boundaries and differences. Their aftermath and significance rises above the immediate and become events in our shared common past from which our present and future must learn from.

Torkel Lundberg and Björnola Lind from the art collaborative Norra Orienten in Sweden came to Bhopal to share their experience of Marieberg, a small town that suffers from the aftermath of dioxin contamination, polluted by the same chemical and corporation that is responsible for the continuing disaster in Bhopal. However, unlike Bhopal, the toxic legacy of Marieberg has been used as a resource to document, disseminate and develop methods of environmental remediation. In 2004, it was declared a cultural reserve for its industrial past, with its social and environmental fallouts. Norra Orienten feels that Marieberg and Bhopal share a common past and use art to generate awareness and activity on such issues. Marieberg's connection with Bhopal is an example of how the story of Bhopal 'has not remained exclusively Indian but every town across the world struggling to strike the fine balance between Industry, Ecology & the Greater Common Good. Marieberg (Sweden) Seveso (Italy) & Missouri (USA), Howrah (India), Guangxi (China), Santa Catarina (Brazil), Mailuu-Suu

Sven Lindqvist's pioneering work Gräv där du står: Hur man utforskar ett jobb (Dig where you stand: How to explore a job) questioned, acknowledged and encouraged local people's ordinary history to be dug, documented, expressed and interpreted as opposed to only grand narratives commissioned by companies. The 'dig-where-you-stand study groups' that emerged thereof, contributed greatly to the prevailing notion on history and heritage in Sweden. Source: Storm 2008, p. 40

(Kyrgyzstan), Havelock (Swaziland) each are a part of the bigger picture that Bhopal today symbolises' (Joshi 2008). Access to the narratives from such sites is an invaluable resource for our present. Bhopal is a representative of India's industrial heritage; embodying narratives of modernity, post-colonialism, displacement, conflict and unresolved environmental issues. It speaks not just for itself but for a larger network of sites and communities that are struggling with similar concerns but might not possess even the visibility that Bhopal enjoys in order to address these.

Exclusions are inherent in inclusions

At the conference, the underlying power dynamics amongst stakeholders proved to be one of the primary challenges the participants encountered in interpreting the tragedy's legacy. Taking cognizance of the political dimension of heritage and commemoration aided them in unearthing subaltern narratives that might have been pre-emptively excluded in hegemonic representations of heritage. Laurajane Smith (2006) offers the alternative of heritage as a cultural practice involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings, whose authenticity lies in the meanings people construct for it in their daily lives. An acknowledgement of the latent power play and politics enables us to harness the very issues that give rise to political nature of Bhopal as a point of departure to mobilise education, awareness and civic engagement. In doing so, it helps us resist the use of heritage as an instrument for consolidating existing power structures.

Dissonance as desirable

'contestation can be viewed as an opportunity, not an obstacle' (Sevcenko 2010, p. 24). The Bhopal2011 event used the disaster and its legacy as an opportunity to be self critical. The diverse group struggled with the multiple narratives in Bhopal while reflecting upon their own similarities and differences. The process highlighted that the articulation of a society's 'shared' heritage straddles consensus, compromise, contradiction and conflict. It is important in the interest of balanced representations of cultural heritage to identify what factors influence our choice to include or overplay certain narratives and exclude or underplay others.

Heritage as a continuous act

'...heritage is a multilayered performance... that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while ... constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present' (Smith 2006, p. 3).

This act of meaning-making at the Bhopal2011 event, where we find multiple narratives of the past, ascribing it values in the present and project its use for a shared future, deters the view of memorials as 'products'. Heritage then becomes intangible, continuous and most importantly promotes engagement. It becomes an 'act' with participants rather than a passive object of observation. It is as valuable as the value we attribute to it and it is this process of attribution that determines its continued relevance in the society. Heritage in Bhopal's context has strategic significance in its potential to serve as a 'powerful catalyst for negotiation and reconciliation through assisting the public in drawing connections between the history of the site and its contemporary implications' (Sevcenko 2008). By a gesture of commemorating the past many hope to bury its uncomfortable questions. The challenge though, lies in embedding and protecting continued engagement with the questions, lessons and legacy of the past into the process of healing and closure.

Acknowledgements

- The ideas expressed in the paper have developed over time and in close contact with our colleagues. As co-organiser of Bhopal2011 and visiting researcher at the University of Gothenburg, Dr. Jan af Geijerstam has been seminal figure in the ongoing research in Bhopal that this paper presents. Our gratitude to the friends of Bhopal across the world including Prof Shin Muramatsu (University of Tokyo) Dr. Bosse Lagerqvist (University of Gothenburg) Dr Hans C Bjoenness (NTNU Trondheim), Prof. Vishakha Kawathekar (School of Planning & Architecture, Bhopal) and Suditya Sinha (Space Matters) who continue to enrich this exploration.

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Notes

1 Bhopal2011: International Workshop & Symposium, conducted in Bhopal between January 23 and February 4, 2011 was a strategic initiative in this ongoing process. Conceptualised by Space Matters, the architects for the memorial complex to be designed at the site, the event was jointly organised by mAAN (modern Asian Architecture Network) and TICCIH (The International Committee for Conservation of Industrial Heritage) India. Bhopal2011 was supported by UNESCO India and the Research Council of Norway. School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal, University of Gothenburg, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, University of Tokyo and the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience were the key institutional partners.

2 The toxic gas leak of 1984 that killed thousands and rendered many more permanently disabled is one of the longest running battles for legal, environmental and social justice in India. The pesticide production plant remains abandoned and contaminated. Its tangible & intangible valuation in the present context remains to be undertaken.

3 Smith refers AHD or authorised heritage discourse as the dominant way to viewing heritage, constructed by primarily architects, archeologists and historians which prescribes preservation of monuments and material remains of the past. It tends to be myopic, monolithic, exclusionary and a tool to validate a professional notion of history. She argues against this concept to construct a use for heritage in society.

4 A semantic distinction accepted and institutionalised by the Bhopal Gas Relief & Rehabilitation Department to administer the affected population of over 500,000.

5 The survivors groups represented in the letter to UNESCO were the following: Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmchari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, Bhopal Group for Information and Action, Chingari Trust, Sanbhavna Trust, International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal.

Engaging with Public History

INDIRA CHOWDHURY'S PERSPECTIVE
BY RAMA LAKSHMI

ABSTRACT

The academic historian is often too comfortable in the archives reading through documents from the past and interpreting them for fellow historians. There have not been too many attempts on their part to engage the public in historical questions. Public history and its powerful tools can be effectively used to open up historical debates for public participation and also make visible the invisible makers of history. While oral history is viewed as an uncertain and unreliable domain by most academics, it can tap into a storehouse of memories of contemporary history that face the danger of erasure if not recorded soon. By blending actual voices and interpreted contexts, a shift can be brought about in ways of teaching and exhibiting history.

INTRODUCTION

It is a commonly held belief, not always untrue, that an archive predominantly comprises of stacks of carefully preserved dusty records, meticulously catalogued for scholarly use. At least, that is the image the word 'archive' evokes. And yet, outside of those stacks of records, there exists a sea of stories that contain people's memories. History that can be excavated from lived experience often remains an untapped

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resource in the traditional method of constructing history. These untapped resources, ignored by history textbooks, form a repository of people's sense of legacy, of remembering and understanding the past. Public history seeks to tap this sense of the past. It attempts to locate people's sense of their own place in that shared past and to say that the past belongs to everyone. Within the Indian context, Nehru's famous 'Tryst with Destiny' speech is a historical marker of independence. From the perspective of the public historian that moment is also one that made the hitherto British subject into a citizen of India. Therefore, the experiences of people who lived through that moment are important for the public historian. Hence, public history is an attempt to democratise access to the past in ways that help us understand how we make meaning out of memory.

There have been very few attempts to engage the public with historical questions in India, as we do not have historians who write for non-professionals. The professional historian in India is an academic who debates at conferences and in scholarly journals. While this is absolutely necessary and extremely important for the discipline's growth, we do also need ways of engaging with history from within public cultural agencies such as museums, archives, heritage sites. The new discipline of 'tourism stuides' has attempted to fulfil this need at the cost of displacing the discipline of history. Therefore, the deeper historical questions remain unaddressed and the task of understanding the process of meaning making from experience is never attempted.

Public history that emerged in the United States of America from the 1950s onwards, became a means of training students of History in careers other than academics, particularly in the museums, archives and other cultural agencies. The student of Public History in the USA, however, had to engage with the parent discipline of History seriously. In India, the task of training people for the museums and archives has been undertaken by the National Museum and the National Archives. However, these programmes are so far removed from academia that students are never encouraged to familiarise themselves with academic debates that can enrich their practice.

Moreover, the new forms of dissemination that could address and use non-traditional sources to explore issues of public history and oral history are completely ignored because museum and archive professionals are trained in cataloguing and conservation. As a result, the larger historical questions that could have been addressed from the space of archival and museum exhibitions have practically never been addressed. Interventions in school programmes that could have been taken up by the education wing of museums or archives are limited to indifferently guided visits for school children. It has never been considered that history can also be a part of everyday life and children can be encouraged to view history as being part of the experience of their grandparents. We have failed to create the aspiration of becoming public historians within students.

HURDLES TO PUBLIC HISTORY

The challenges to public history in India are many. First, museums need to build Education Units that work on the processes dissemination that could present new understandings of heritage monuments and effectively intervene in school curricula, and public commemoration. We would need to train historians who can work as researchers, curators and educators and also work alongside technicians. In particular, there is a need to train oral historians who could effectively conduct interviews about people's lives and experiences and their engagement with cultural landscapes, in and around heritage monuments.

The academic historian could well become an ally in this journey. This is an interesting moment in India as several academic historians have started conducting oral history interviews and have begun to helm projects that have a public history dimension. Some examples are the Archives of Indian Labour, a project headed by Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and the archival exhibitions curated by the historian Tapati Guha Thakurta, the most recent one called, 'The City in the Archives: Calcutta's visual histories'.

CONSTRUCTING HISTORY

In India, we often mistakenly think of public history as history that exists in the domain of the media. This is not public history, which seeks engagement with the public; instead this is superficial and no more than opinions articulated by politicians. The powerful tools of public history can be effectively used to open up debates to public participation. Moreover, oral history methods can also bring into focus the invisible makers of history.

Academic historians often view oral history as an uncertain and unreliable domain, somewhat tricky

and challenging. But researchers over the past few decades have argued that traditional academic history is vulnerable to the same charges, as all historical information comes to us through numerous filters. Oral history can be used effectively to tap into a storehouse of memories of contemporary history that face the danger of erasure if not recorded soon.

Oral histories that inevitably depend on individual memories have, not surprisingly, been the subject of much debate. Indeed, the difference and correspondence between memory and history and their mutual contributions to providing an understanding of the past has been the subject of numerous academic disputes. Maurice Halbwachs (1980, p. 86) cautioned against the conflation of collective memory and history, as collective memory not only lacks in objectivity but also provides the 'group with a self-portrait that unfolds through time, since it is an image of the past and allows the group to recognise itself through a total succession of images'. Although Halbwachs (*ibid.*, p. 78) sees memory and history as mutually opposed, he does draw our attention to the social matrix of memory.

On the other hand, memory has also been seen as a significant and interesting resource for history. Phillippe Ariès (Hutton 1988), who had traced the beginnings of historiography to human memory, had argued in the 1950s that it is through memory that history can reveal mentalities that existed in the past. The theories of Ariès inspired alternative approaches to the past which attempted to mine the storehouses of collective memory in order to reconstruct the human face of displaced and uprooted communities who had until then been ignored in official records.

The subsequent growth of oral history as a discipline challenged the mode of history-writing itself, arguing for 'a radical transformation of the social meaning of history' (Thompson 2000, p. 24).

Theoreticians like Alessandro Portelli (1991) have argued, that what was seen as the unreliability of oral history and a weakness, is now being looked upon as its strength, because it functions as a resource that helps in understanding what is remembered and how it is remembered. Another paradigm shift that occurred came with the shift in the approach to 'objectivity'. What was objectivity in History? Are documents more objective? Are these not written by somebody with a point of view? Oral history is not inaccurate but it is subjective and the oral historian has to take into account that element of subjectivity.

ORAL HISTORY

In India, oral traditions are often part of our cultural memory and therefore, part of our history. Rustam Bharucha (2003) demonstrates this effectively in his conversations with Komal Kothari, when he looks at the complex processes of transmission of traditions. Kothari says (*ibid.*, p. 25),

> I think it is important to keep in mind that folklore is always contemporary, even when it deals with cultures and communities who continue to live outside of modernity. If the past continues to have any meaning in society, it survives; otherwise it disappears, not unlike a ripple on the surface of a lake, which breaks sooner or later.

Kothari talks about communities in Rajasthan who recite genealogies and who are consulted before a marriage is arranged. This is similar to Alex Haley's (1976) framing of the relationship between local repositories of history and oral traditions, when he spoke of the *griot*s (bards in West Africa) who recite the stories of communities and families. Most traditional communities in rural India have an elder or a group of elders who would know the stories of that village. This needs to be taken into account when conducting oral history interviews in the Indian context. There was a popular belief prevalent for many years that viewed folklore as a cultural ritual or a myth making tradition. That view is slowly eroding now, as cultural forms of narratives are seen as an important tool for constructing oral history.

ORAL HISTORIES IN INDIA

The earliest collection of oral histories that serve as research resources were created by Professor BR Nanda, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in the 1960s. Doctor C S Lakshmi has collected women's stories in audio and video for SPARROW, Mumbai. The Karnataka State Archive has collected oral histories, so have the Godrej Archives and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) Archives set up in 2004. Apart from these archival collections, scholars and writers such as Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon, C S Lakshmi, Suroopa Mukherjee, Susie Tharu and K Lalitha have written books that have made used of extensive oral history sources that they themselves had created.

The methodology of oral history helps us understand what people have lived through during the partition as well as social movements such as the Telengana movements and the protest movement in Bhopal.

Besides, the field of memory studies has now alerted us to ways of understanding the clash of official and unofficial narratives and alerted us to the ways in which these can sometimes exist alongside each other for centuries. This presents an interesting challenge for oral historians. 'Official' versions of history can get embedded in memory, but only the critical tools available to an oral historian could point out the mechanisms by which the official and the unofficial cohabit each other's spaces and provide complex explanations about the persistence of official versions of history.

To initiate an interest in oral history, a course called 'Talking History' in January was initiated at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, Bengaluru. The student exercises for the course focussed on people's relationship to water bodies in and around Bengaluru and seven student films broadly called 'Water Stories' were made.[1]

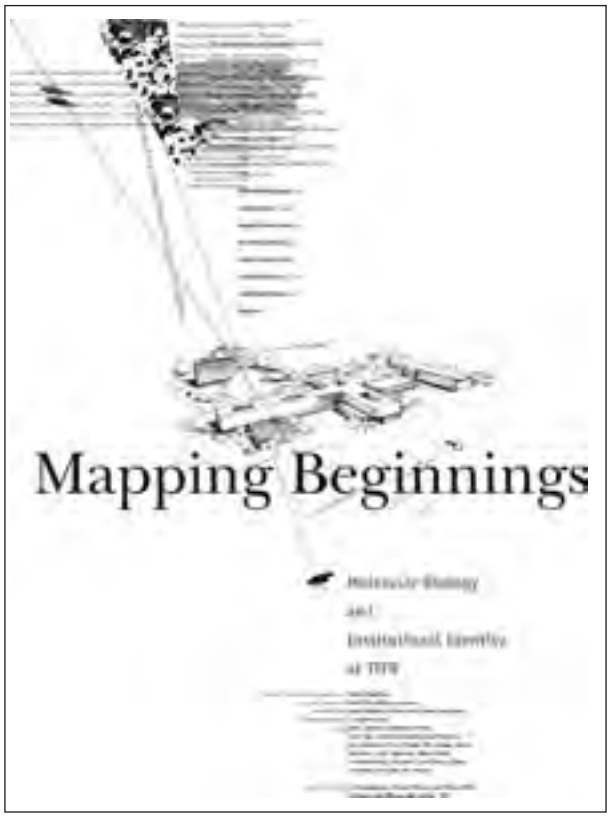
The task of collecting oral histories, training people to collect them, archiving them, making them available to public is more urgent now. While the conventional archival sources are usually collected by the state, unofficial narratives not recorded by the state need to be collected, to bridge the gap in the records. There have been no concerted efforts to do this so far. We have already lost one generation who lived through the making of independent India but we should ensure that we do not lose the next.

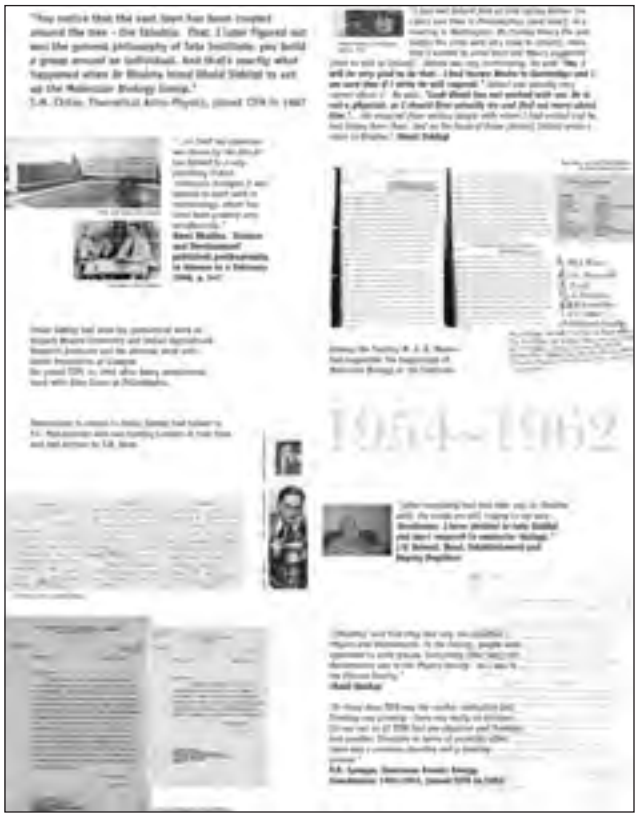
CASE STUDIES

The relationship between institutional history, collective memory and an institutional archive is not a self evident one. The dependence of institutional archives on institutional funding makes institutions particularly vulnerable to portraying a narcissistic image of the institution. Indeed, the power of an institution to control its archival activities can extend from archival organisation and the kind of material made available, to the strict monitoring of access. This could, consequently, lead to the creation of an archive that confirms and echoes the master narrative of institutional history put in place by the institution itself. The inclusion of oral histories to tap into the collective memory of institutional life, the building of collaborative research networks with related disciplines and the creation of outreach and dissemination programmes in the form of exhibitions and publications might enable archives to overcome institutional demands to display official, narcissistic self portrayals.

The usefulness of an archive to an institution is usually measured in non-academic terms. The archives become the repository of legal records and records of administrative decisions of the institution; in other words, a repository of 'precedents'. For this reason, perhaps, historical information about many institutions, particularly science institutions, in India is usually available with its public relations officers rather than with librarians or archivists. Although this is changing,

Process of recording oral history





Posters for exhibitions organised by TIFR

we need to train more people to implement changes that would make institutional archives a public repository of knowledge.

The three case studies here draw on the experience of setting up institutional archives and the attempt to create a public form of dissemination.

Tata Institute of Fundamental Research

This is where my journey as a public historian began. I wished to persuade our institutions to create archives so that our scholars could have access to the material in India. Otherwise, most Indian historians have to often spend long periods of their research leave at the India Office Library in London studying documents. On a sabbatical from Jadavpur University and as a historian in residence to the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) of the TIFR from 2002-2004, I initiated an oral history project on the History of Molecular Biology in India. This resulted in an exhibition called 'Mapping Beginnings: Molecular Biology at TIFR' that was displayed at NCBS, Bangalore, Mumbai and Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

I was invited to start the archives of TIFR by Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya who was Director at that time. An oral history archives was created after conducting multi-session interviews with over 35 scientists. In order to create an interest in the archives within the local scientific community, a monthly bulletin board was put together on the TIFR archives that showcased documents and highlighted nuggets of institutional history. The themes were often diverse; from the history of balloon flights to the proton decay experiments, from the creation of the Amoeba Garden at TIFR to Bhabha's relationship to the progressive art movement and artist M F Husain's association with the Institute[2]. We conducted a quiz for students on the history of science and the history of TIFR. Every founder's day, the archives created a slideshow out of material from the Homi Bhabha archives at the Institute. Two exhibitions were curated in 2005 and 2006, titled 'Partners in Science: JRD Tata and TIFR' and 'Homi Bhabha and the Cambridge Connection', respectively. The TIFR Archive is now consulted by scholars from all over the world.

During the Bhabha centenary in 2009, we took the initiative to create an 'archival book' on Homi Bhabha. This book (Chowdhury and Dasgupta 2010) included the archives of Homi Bhabha, photographs, his letters and other documents such as the document showing

his election to the Royal Society, as well as excerpts from the oral history interviews that we conducted with scientists and scientific workers who knew him closely. Bhabha's modernity was essentially European in flavour. The archival book needed to reflect the design of the period it belonged to in its typography, design and layout. With the intervention of designer Sarita Sundar, we chose the colours of the Bauhaus movement and machine-derived fonts, so that a historical reflection of the times echoes through everything consistently.

Naandi Foundation

In 2006, as part of the initiative of setting up the Archival Resources for Contemporary History (ARCH), we began setting up the archives of the Hyderabad based Naandi Foundation, which works on education, health, livelihoods and safe drinking water projects all over India. Oral history interviews were conducted with stakeholders at the grassroots levels to understand the impact of changes that have been brought about through Naandi's intervention. The oral history testimonials with tribal members also revealed that there exists a complicated functioning of institutional myths in the restructuring and reinventing of identities (Chowdhury 2010).[3]

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories

When Hyderabad based Dr. Reddy's Laboratories turned 25 years old in 2009, ARCH was invited to create its archives. We collected documents and photographs from every office and every factory they have. To create an excitement about the archives, we produced a monthly newsletter called the 'DR[25] Archives' that showcased documents and interview excerpts around a theme from the material we were collecting. Some of these were 'The Promise of Molecules: Discovery Research at Dr. Reddy's', 'Treating the Fire Within: The Omez Story'and 'Gifting Dreams: Social Responsibility at Dr. Reddy's. A 'Milestones' document; a memory book called 'Molecules, Moments and Memories: Twenty Five Years of Dr Reddy's' and an oral history archive was created by interviewing people from the Board, the management, scientists and workers.[4]

CONCLUSION

There is a need to bring about a shift in the teaching of history in India. This should be done from the school level onwards. As long as history is treated as dates to be memorised, as long as history focuses only on the lives of kings and battles fought or on compiling a list of achievements of politicians or state bodies, our history books will never come to life. It needs to be emphasised that history is as much about ordinary people who have lived through certain events.

Within the public realm, Indian museums have long become 'dead' spaces where objects are kept in glass cases with very little reference to the people who used them. The dry and often long winding, technical information panels at museums disable any form of fruitful engagement as audiences rush along without paying much attention. The spoken words of people who remember something about these museum objects could transform the exhibit. More importantly, new narratives could emerge if we focussed on multiple voices that capture diverse perspectives. This would also ensure that we avoid indifferent and insensitive 'master narratives' that speak of everything and communicate nothing.

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Notes

1 The films can be viewed at <http://vimeo.com/talkinghistory/videos>.

2 He painted one of his earliest murals for the TIFR.

3 The sound recordings and transcriptions of the interviews are preserved with the Naandi Foundation and a Memory Book that excerpted oral history interviews and photographs are available in a scrapbook at <http://picasaweb.google.com/indira.chowdhury/Scrapbook?authkey=Gv1sRgCNahoeXc5pDvoAE&feat=directlink>.

4 The Milestones, the Archive of Oral Histories and the Memory Book are on the website <http://www.drreddys.com/25yearsofhealth/home.shtml>.

Confronting the Past
Thoughts on a Partition Museum

URVASHI BUTALIA

ABSTRACT

For over 20 years, I have collected Partition narratives, recording the stories of survivors of the violence, from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. At every stage, I have faced the question of how to store, use and disseminate this fascinating material for scholars and researchers; whether to store it in physical space or virtual, so that I do not compromise the people to whom I have spoken. One of the extremely valuable documents contains names of 22,000 women who were abducted and raped. Some of these women may still be alive. Should one make this list public and compromise their right to privacy in the interest of the search for 'truth'? In this paper, I explore such troubling questions about the Partition that remains a living history, even after 60 years. How do you 'museumise' such a history in a manner that is appropriate, sensitive and responsible? There are no easy answers.

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INTRODUCTION

How do you preserve and memorialise a painful past? Is there any value in remembering? Is there a way in which public memory, particularly of traumatic pasts, can be made to serve the interests of a peaceful future? Do

nations and peoples need to fear the past? These and similar questions have largely remained unanswered in India, at least at a state level and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that as Indians, we are somehow fearful of confronting the past.

ARCHIVING PARTITION MEMORIES

For the last decade and a half, I have been researching and writing on the hidden histories of the Partition, looking mainly at the memories of survivors. Every interview uncovers a different experience of violence, loss, uprooting, grief and trauma. For many people, the past remains, somehow unresolved, unacknowledged and without a closure. The question that confronts the researcher at every step is: if these memories live on so powerfully inside families and communities, why have we, as historians, as citizens, been unable to give these a public face and indeed, the attention they deserve.

In the city of Delhi for example, the Old Fort or Purana Qila, became a major location where hundreds of thousands of refugees were housed. Yet, today there is not even a plaque or a notice that marks this important history. While the older history of the construction of the Fort and its subsequent use and indeed the archaeological discoveries in its vicinity, have rightly received considerable attention, the more recent history might never have happened. In Amritsar, the border at Wagah and the station at Attari were two crossing points where the *kafila*s (convoys) of Partition refugees crossed over in their thousands. Neither spot has anything that recounts or marks that historical moment, other than a plaque carrying a poem by Amrita Pritam that was recently installed.

It is not only about how we have not found a way of marking a particular place or location of a certain kind of history; that is one kind of remembering, but a little over 60 years after Partition, we are still unable, perhaps even unwilling, to address the question of how one memorialises, preserves, archives and brings such a history to life. In the last 10 years, a number of scholars researching the Partition have based their research on oral narratives. Together, they hold a formidable resource that can not only provide insights into the experience of surviving the Partition, but also be of use to future generations of scholars. Yet, there is no library or museum where such material is housed. Further questions about how such material can be catalogued, whether voice tapes and video interviews can be stored, questions of privacy and responsibility, still remain to be addressed. All of these become clearer as people begin to collect material and the nature of the material becomes known.

PARTITION ARTEFACTS

About three years ago, as part of a programme of lectures on Partition entitled 'Partition: The Long Shadow', Pragna Parasher, daughter of the artist S L Parasher, made a presentation on her father's work. Apart from being a well known artist S L Parasher was also Camp Commandant of the largest refugee camp located at Ambala, in the Punjab during Partition. While carrying out his duties as Commandant, he observed the refugees and whenever he found the time he sketched what he saw. His drawings of men and women huddled against the cold, sitting together in grief, shouting out in anger; provide one of the most telling visual records of the time.

In Parasher's belongings, his family found a large number of objects that throw light on yet another aspect of the multi-layered history of Partition: many of the Hindu and Sikh refugees who moved to India were unable to find jobs or professions of the kind they had held in their earlier lives. As part of the exercise of helping them to set up their lives again, the state provided training in professions where there was a need for skilled people because many who had held such jobs had now migrated across the border. Such training, while it provided a means of livelihood, also often meant going down a notch or two in the class ladder for many people. This was something that could not have been easy in a society so steeped in class hierarchies. Perhaps, the simplest way to put it is that professionals or shopkeepers were often unable to find jobs for themselves and had to retrain, many found themselves becoming artisans. Parasher's collection of materials has a number of objects that were used in such trainings and it is very likely that his jottings from that time will have insights to offer about how people adjusted to such changes.

In the normal course, objects such as these should be placed in a museum for viewing, where their presence can lead to other histories and other subjects for research. But even if Parasher's family wished to place the entire collection in a museum, there is no obvious home that offers itself. So these remain with the family, brought out occasionally and put on public view. Fortunately, Parasher's collection is still there in its entirety, in the safe custody of his family. There must be many other such objects that can tell us stories about Partition that remain with families or have been lost.

The signage at Old Fort conveys information about the excavations undertaken, but none on its role of housing refugees during the Partition. Source: Naresh Kumar

ETHICS OF DISPLAYING PARTITION MEMORY

Of course, the collecting and archiving of such material is not simple. There is no question that it is important to place this kind of material physically or virtually in one place, so that it can be kept safe and also made accessible to scholars. But there are a number of issues that are attached to its use and dissemination. These have to do with the ethics of recording, storing and disseminating personal histories and indeed living histories, as the history of Partition is.

During the course of my research on Partition I came across a book in a second hand bookstore near Delhi. Entitled 'Non Muslim Abducted Women', this book was published in 1952 by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation and apparently its publication had been held back because of the fear that the revealing of names of women who had been abducted and quite possibly raped. It could lead to serious consequences for the women, particularly in a society where the stigma of rape attaches to the victim rather than the aggressor. Eventually, when they did publish it, some families were able to trace their women through this book. But, after a few years, its primary purpose was to serve as a valuable resource; a book that would provide a profile by factors such as geographical location and age of the abducted women. Not being a properly published book; that is, not published for wide dissemination, but more as a record, there are not many copies in libraries.

I managed to purchase this book and to use some of the material in it for my research. But it did not end there. The profiles in the book, the numbers added up to (nearly 22,000 names of women and children who had disappeared) nagged at me and I constantly thought about what to do and how to do it. Alongside, researchers and friends urged me to put the contents of this book on the net so that it becomes available to others and may help in tracing some of the women listed in the book. Suppose for a moment that this could actually happen, that if they are still alive, some of the women in that book might even come out with their stories, this book could then be the catalyst for bringing these stories to public attention. And if the actual collecting of stories is done well and professionally, these can form part of a virtual museum of Partition. As ideas go, this is excellent. But it is not unproblematic. What are the ethics of making such material public? Do we as researchers, have any responsibility to the women who are mentioned in the book? Suppose for a moment that one of them is still alive, the chances are that her family will not be aware of the history she has lived through[1] and she is probably ashamed of that history. So for the archivist or museum curator, the question becomes one of ethics and responsibility; where do these lie, in some abstract notion of truth or in people's lives? These questions become so much sharper when one is dealing with a living history and would certainly influence any collection of materials for a possible Partition museum.

It is not that examples of museums where such living histories are housed, whether in actual or virtual spaces, do not exist. They do and considerable thought has gone into making them function as repositories of history and memory. Perhaps, the most striking example of this is Constitution Hill in Johannesburg where the old prison where black prisoners were held has been retained, some parts in their entirety and others only in part. The combination of buildings, voices, text and music, as well as the use of open space, help the visitor in both absorbing the atmosphere and getting a sense of the inhuman conditions people had to live through, along with absorbing the history through the texts. Possibly, the most moving aspect of this capturing of the living history is that the Constitution Court, where many of the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were held, is actually constructed using bricks from the dismantled prisons. If Constitution Hill in Johannesburg provides one such example, the Auschwits-Birkenau 'museums' provide another; a nuanced way of remembering and memorialising a horrific past, in order to guard against its repetition in the future.

AGENTS OF MEMORY

The question then must be asked again: what is it that stops us in South Asia, but more specifically in India and perhaps Pakistan, from doing something similar or indeed different, in order to mark, acknowledge and remember the history of Partition? The question does not have a straightforward answer. Although there are private museums all over the world, the responsibility for memorialising the histories such as those of apartheid, the holocaust, partition, has by and large lain with the state. By admitting such memories, the state also in some ways acknowledges its responsibility and indeed in many instances its culpability and complexity towards those histories.

For both India and Pakistan, the history of Partition has by and large been expressed and remembered in

The Wagah border, Amritsar was one of the two points where thousands of Partition refugees crossed over. Yet, there is nothing marking the historical event at the site. Source: Kunkumadevi Sivaraman

very partial ways. It has always been only a political history, with its writers and scholars being unable or unwilling to address people's feelings, their losses, their pain and grief and their vengefulness. The parallel and much more important master narrative for both nations has been the narrative of independence, a moment of euphoria that cannot really be marked by admitting the memory and violence of Partition. Creating a museum to this history is therefore not an enterprise that would find much support.

Within India there is also another problem that is only reluctantly acknowledged and that is the widespread sense among the largely Hindu establishment that the Muslims were in some way responsible for Partition. Any attempt to recreate a nuanced history of it then would meet with considerable resentment from the Hindu Right, which is not to say that the state should refrain from doing something that may lead to unintended consequences, merely to note that this concern does exist.

And there is also the problem of resources. For such a museum to exist, resources need to be allocated and for that political will and commitment are both necessary.

However, there is also a danger that attaches to this, as is evident from the museum of war that is connected to the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo in Japan. Here, the narrative of war, because it is told by the state, is a hyper nationalist one in which Japan is always the victim and a whole history of Japanese aggression in China and elsewhere, as well as Japanese submission to the United States, has been glossed over. So, state involvement is not unproblematic.

But a second question then poses itself: if an actual museum cannot easily be created, what is to stop the state marking in some way the histories of the many places where Partition history unfolded? Kingsway Camp in Delhi was a place that housed large numbers of refugees, its name also comes from the fact that they were camped there. Why do we have no recall of this? The same question can be effectively posed for many other locations.

CONCLUSION

Most of all, however, the exercise of remembering and memorialising has to be an exercise also in integrity and honesty. There is much that we can learn from

the past, but we can only learn it if we acknowledge our mistakes. The complication that surrounds the narratives of Partition is that precisely because there are no unambiguous 'good guys' and 'bad guys' in this narrative. Indeed, as everyone is implicated in some ways, it becomes much more difficult to memorialise. Doing so also forces families, communities, individuals and the state to admit to their culpability. Perhaps it is this that we are not ready for yet.

But there is an urgency, as time is not on our side here. Partition is already over six decades in the past and people who saw, experienced and lived through it, are dying or have already gone. If the wisdom and learning their lives and stories hold, are not taken into account sooner rather than later, a valuable part of our history will be lost.

Note

[1] There is nothing surprising in this, women who had lived through rape, seldom talked about it.

Mapping Social Identities

MINJA YANG

Museums all over India need serious upgrading, not only to do justice to the fabulous artefacts of incredible value but especially for the public to understand the meaning of these objects beyond the initial appreciation of their aesthetics. While the 'awe' effect stimulated by the masterpieces of 'Indian art', whether these are sculptures, paintings, textiles or objects of daily use, are indeed important, the wealth of these objects depicting India's cultural and natural diversity, merit better display and interpretation. The knowledge vested in these can be understood and appreciated at various levels by people from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds, irrespective of whether they are national or international visitors.

During my 15 years of association with India and its fascinating people, I had the privilege of visiting many museums in different regions of the country in my capacity as a senior official[1] of UNESCO. I must admit that these probably represent less than 1% of India's estimated 1,000 national, state and private museums. Since 2005, my task, as UNESCO Representative in India, was to link UNESCO's mandate and activities to the high priority concerns of the United Nations (UN) in general. Through the so-called UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), devised to build the UN Country Programme for India, one of the activities I pursued with the Culture Unit of the UNESCO New Delhi Office was the development of a concept for an ethnographic museum. Initially,

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while still at the Paris Headquarters of UNESCO, the plan was to work on a small 'community museum' focused on one 'ethnic' community in the North East[2]. This was because of UNESCO's limited seed funding and also because I felt that the organisation's mandate in safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage and in promoting cultural industries to protect and enhance cultural diversity could be best fulfilled by working on one ethnic group to serve as a demonstration case, rather than to disperse, hence leading to generalities.

The idea of an ethnographic museum that I wanted to pursue, would require the involvement of the concerned community so that they understand and recount the significance of their own culture vis-a-vis the so-called dominant national culture and even in relation to the world and its global reference. It would have been essential for the old and young generation of the community to work together as 'the curator' or at least as advisors to 'the professional curator' to explain their way of life. I felt that the best way to make the differences and similarities understandable to all visitors would be to use the 'storyline' of daily life, accentuated by the hallmarks of life: birth, puberty, relations with parents, siblings and extended family, school, games played with friends, daily household choirs, daily meals, special food and its preparation, employment and relations at work, love, selection of a spouse, marriage and its ceremony, pregnancy, child-rearing, relations with the local government... and eventually 'retirement' and the life of the aged, followed by death, its related rituals and concept of after-life. Through such a story of one's life and beliefs, recounted through rituals, ceremonies and general attitude towards the family and community, notions of happiness and worries in life, idea of 'good' and 'bad', 'beauty' and 'ugliness'; the general public, as well as the discerning expert visitors would be able to appreciate the permanent exhibition, while leaving plenty of scope for temporary thematic exhibitions which the local community, especially schools, can be solicited to curate.

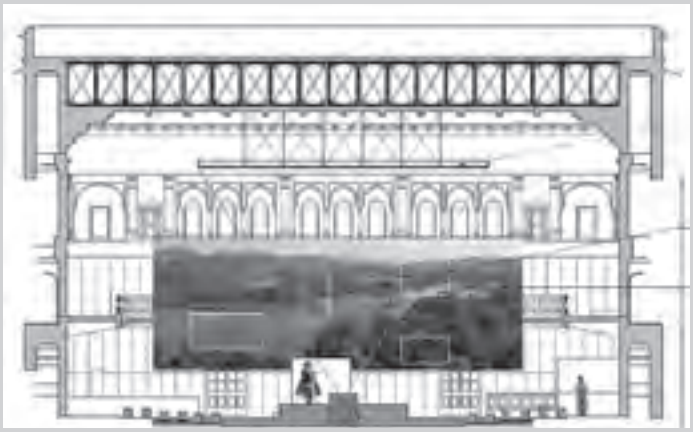
I dreamed of a simple 'museum' displaying not only pertinent objects, but with the use of video clips to show how these objects are or were used and to animate the display with interviews of all constituents of the community such as children, the youth, married couples, parents, grandparents, priests and the local politicians, to recount their life. Since 'life' anywhere in the world is 'lived', with more or less the same concerns, the idea was to understand the 'other' through what one can relate to from one's own life experience.

Most unfortunately, just before I arrived to take up my post, the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India objected to UNESCO involvement in a project focused on this particular tribal community and the Permanent Delegate of India reprimanded the UNESCO Secretariat for choosing a project proposal submitted without going through their vetting process. The project was therefore 'shelved' and a new project focused on a general ethnographic museum was adopted instead.

Once stationed in Delhi, I realised that the 'ethnic group' that we had selected for the pilot project, was not in the least bit controversial and had been the subject of many photo reportages. However, since the decision had already been made to change the project into a more general one on 'tribal museum', we started working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, whose Secretary at the time warmly welcomed UNESCO's ideas. My attempt to involve the Ministry of Culture in the same project however did not succeed. It made me realise that inter-ministerial joint activities were not yet an accepted modality of work. In view of the limited budget, rather than to attempt the establishment of a new museum, the project aim became the development of a new concept for the renovation of one of the established museums of mankind. Despite the Secretary's interest in our concept, we realised the difficulty of navigating through the many layers of decision makers in the Indian bureaucracy to introduce change.

With the ratification of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage by India, my hope is that the idea of a community-based local museum would become increasingly accepted to form part of the on-going decentralisation process where local self-governance would take into consideration the reality of managing cultural pluralism. The need for the leaders of the country to make a conscious effort in public awareness and education to promote tolerance between citizens of diverse origin is immense, making India's motto of 'unity in diversity' the foundation of a just society. I am convinced that one day, India will become an international reference for democratic governance of cultural pluralism in a world that is becoming sadly characterised by bigotry, combined with religious and ethnic-based conflict.

CITY MUSEUMS IN INDIA



Proposed City Museum at Sawai Man Singh Town Hall with a 4G audiovisual show of Sawai Jai Singh II narrating the story of making Jaipur. Source: Lord Cultural Resources

In the march towards creating community museums that portray local narratives, the story of India's cities can play a pivotal role in forging new identities and understanding the old deep-rooted ones. In view of the ancient history of India's urban settlements and the interesting formation of its neighbourhoods linked with the caste-based professions and religious beliefs, Indian cities would be a fascinating subject for city museums.

City museum or 'interpretation centre', established as a joint effort between the municipal authorities and the citizens, is becoming increasingly popular in Japan and the western world. As part of the city's effort to enhance its attractiveness and to involve the inhabitants in 'cultural animation', small museums featuring the history of the city from its foundation to the present, recounting the spatial evolution as well as urban social and economic change are emerging in many countries. These include the developing countries of Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Arab States. In view of the ancient history of India's urban settlements and the interesting formation of its neighbourhoods linked with the caste-based professions and religious beliefs, Indian cities would be a fascinating subject for city museums.

With the ever increasing trend of rural to urban migration and the important proportion of India's population becoming urban dwellers, it is high time that the Ministry of Urban Development, state governments and municipal authorities initiate projects to establish city museums, especially in the so called 'heritage cities'. As part of the UNESCO initiated Indian Heritage Cities Network (IHCN), the member cities are to establish a 'Heritage House' that not only aims to serve as a community advisory service in conservation and valorisation of heritage buildings but also to become an interpretation centre for the city's evolution. These Heritage Houses can become the embryo of much more ambitious city museums.

With political decentralisation being the order of the day since the adoption of the 74th Constitutional Amendment, municipal authorities need to manage the city's multi-ethnic and multi-religious inhabitants through democratic and participatory governance. One can only imagine the fabulous city museums that can be established in cities like Jaipur, focusing on its Walled City; Varanasi, considered to be 'the' most spiritual city in the world with the Ganges River and its *ghat*s (stepped embankments) providing the centrality that many cities could only dream of having or Ahmedabad, where its traditional craft based industries in sync with its leading educational institutions are now reaching out into the global economy with contemporary creativity. Of course, museums that can capture the change in the narratives of cities like Bhopal, Cochin, Delhi, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Mysore, Udaipur and Ujjain, to name but a few of India's fabulous cities, will have to become the central mandate of 21st century urban Indian transition. All these cities and more, merit having a city museum to show to its own citizens and to the growing number of international visitors, the value of their respective pluri-cultural and socio-economic significance.

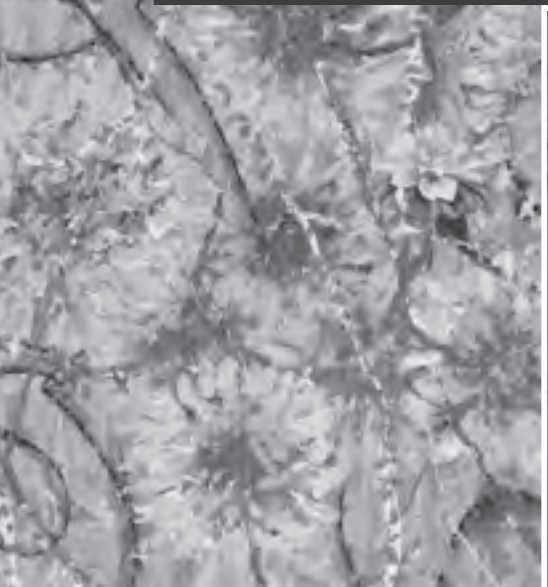
Notes

1 As Chief of Angkor Unit (1990-1994) and concurrently Head of Inter-sectoral Task Force on Cambodia; Chief of Asia-Pacific Unit (1994-2000) of the World Heritage Centre; Deputy Director (1994-2004) World Heritage Centre; Director for Museum Development and concurrently Charge de mission for culture and local governance (2004-2005) at UNESCO HQs in Paris; Director, UNESCO sub-regional Office in New Delhi and UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka (2005-2009).

2 Identity withheld on purpose.



Intangible Cultural Heritage



Dastangoi
Revival of the Mughal Art of storytelling

MAHMOOD FAROOQUI

ABSTRACT

Dastangoi, the art of Urdu storytelling is said to have died in 1928 when its last great practitioner Mir Baqar Ali died an anonymous death in Delhi. With him passed away the centuries' old art of spontaneously composing and performing stories of epical length. All that the tradition left behind was tomes of stories, extending to about 46 volumes of over a thousand pages each. With no clues into the actual practice of Dastangoi, the legendary Urdu scholar Shamsur Rahman Faruqi set to work to collect the volumes and do a study of it. Over the last 25 years he not only managed to collect the entire works but has also produced a six volume study of the form. His works inspired me to start performing from the stories. Over the last six years, the modern stint of Dastangoi has seen over 200 shows, with over a dozen people incorporated into the form. The article will trace a brief history of the tradition, how it got to be revived, whether it is a revival, a rebuilding or something else altogether, the major new experiments made to it and the future ahead.

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INTRODUCTION

The act of preserving valuable cultural patrimony is central to museum institutions. But many intangible cultures that have travelled down the

centuries are part of the India's continuing and living museums. The six-year old endeavour to revive the Mughal-era storytelling tradition of Dastangoi aims at keeping alive art forms with which we can explore both our past and present.

DASTANGOI: A SHORT HISTORY

The word Dastangoi refers to the art of storytelling, it is a compound of two Persian words 'dastan' and 'goi' which means to tell a story. Dastans were epics, often oral in nature that were recited or read aloud. Telling tales of adventure, magic and warfare, dastans mapped new worlds and horizons, encountered the unseen and protected the hero through many travails and lovers as he moved on his quest. The hero's adventures could sometimes parallel the mystic quest, at other times the story narrated a purely profane tale. In the process of telling the story the narrators freely borrowed tropes and themes from other stories, thus it was that Rumi's 'Masnavi' and 'Arabian Nights' both came to contain many stories from the 'Panchtantra' tradition.

While dastans had many principals and many stories, the story of Abu Hamza, supposedly an uncle of the Prophet Mohammed, began to stand out early on. Beginning with an unknown Arabic version, the Persian versions of the story from the 14th century onwards narrated his life and adventures. Dastangoi survived as a performance or recitation form for centuries before reaching its climax and also its sudden demise in 19th century North India.

The upheaval of 1857 turned out to be a boon for Lucknow as thousands of artists, poets and writers migrated there from Delhi and this included several dastangos[1]. The first historian of Lucknow, Abdul Halim Sharar wrote in 'Guzishta Lucknow' about the proliferation of the art of Dastangoi in the city after the uprising. Every nobleman, he said, had made it a practice to employ a dastango in his retinue as *chowk*s (city squares) became a favoured site for performance of the art. Sharar defined it as the art of 'extemporaneous composition' and said that it rested on descriptions of four phenomena, 'war, romance, trickery and magical artifices'.

The dastangos in Sharar's time, therefore, were not reciting a story learnt from memory, they were improvising on the bare structures that had been handed down to them. The stories they recited mainly related to Hamza, his sons and companions. In the stories Hamza travels to different realms, has several adventures, fights wars, slays demons, subdues sorcerers, destroys evil and establishes the sway of righteousness, truth and justice everywhere. These tales were very popular in the medieval era and the Mughal Emperor Akbar was so fond of them that he commissioned his biggest artistic project, the 'Hamzanama', to illustrate his achievements.

FROM AN ORAL TRADITION TO PRINT

After the uprising, the Hamza story began to enjoy great currency in print. Fort William College, established in Calcutta in early 19th century with the aim of teaching Indian languages and literatures to colonial officials, had already published a version. By the 1850s, the legendary publisher from Lucknow, Munshi Nawal Kishore, commissioned another edition that continued to be printed for an entire century with minor changes and was last published in the 1960s. Persian versions of the story were also being printed at the same time.

In 1881, Nawal Kishore embarked on a highly ambitious literary print project. He assembled some of the leading dastangos of Lucknow and commissioned them to produce the entire Hamza narrative as it existed in oral and written records. The team comprised of three writers Mohammed Husain Jah, Ahmed Husain Qamar and Sheikh Tasadduq Husain, who were later joined by others. The result, by the end of a labour of 25 years, was a series consisting of 46 huge volumes, each about a thousand pages long. Each of the volumes could be read as an independent entity, or one could read it as part of the whole.

We have very scanty information about the exact mode of reproduction or production, followed by these narrator-authors. Although they repeatedly claim to be basing their rendition on pre-existing texts, often in Persian and ascribe authorship to august figures of antiquity, none of the previously existing versions they quote can be found. It is a reasonable guess that the expansion of the story from a single volume to this mammoth series was a creation mainly of the performative tradition. Earlier they were circulating in the oral realm, which may have rested on written records in the form of key or guide books that outlined the main characters and the run of the plot but the body was supplied by the narrator as he recited the story. We don't even know whether these dastangos dictated the stories and they came to be written by scribes or they actually wrote it in their hands. Thus, an oral tradition that had survived for centuries as a performative genre

was now acquiring a new lease of life, as something to be read in addition to being heard.

With the passing away of the last great dastango, Mir Baqar Ali in Delhi in 1928 the whole tradition died, almost abruptly. Before he died Baqar Ali did a three minute audio recording with George Grierson when the latter was compiling his great Linguistic Survey.[2]

Herein lies one of the greatest conundrums of our cultural history. A thriving oral form becomes a literary form and is so successful that the practice generating these texts is erased. At the same time, the texts themselves drop out of public memory over time leaving only a trace of the tradition behind in the form of the eight volumes of the 'Tilism-e Hoshruba'.

THE BEGINNING OF REVIVAL

Prompted by the Columbian scholar Frances Pritchett, the great Urdu critic S R Faruqi first started collecting dastans in the early 1980s. He found the volumes dispersed all over the world, many of them difficult to trace. Finally in 1998 he published the first volume of his study of the tradition. He analysed the stories, set out their rules, explained the importance of orality in their creation and arraigned Urdu critics for their grievous neglect of the form. It was S R Faruqi who drew my attention to this genre.

I read Faruqi's masterly book with great interest and decided to make a documentary on the form and its history. During the course of a Fellowship at Sarai, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, I gave a lecture demonstration on the form, following which I first explored the possibility of actually performing the text. The best way to demonstrate its prowess was to let the text speak.

PERFORMING DASTANGOI AGAIN

Traditional Dastangoi was restricted to a single performer. The innovation I made was to rope in another actor so that we would alternate our recitations and participate as listeners to each other's stories and energy. It also broke the monotony and became more dialogic. Due to the neglect of the form we had very little information about the actual practice of the art. How did dastangos sit; how much did they move around; what were individual stylistic feats; did they take breaks; how was the audience arranged; did they sing out the poetry. None of these things are clear even now. Working closely with S R Faruqi, we drew on our

Mahmood Farooqui introducing Dastangoi at the first modern Dastangoi festival in Mumbai in 2010.
Source: Syed Ahmed Afzal

theatre experiences to put together a one hour show. The first modern Dastangoi performance took place on May 4, 2005 at the auditorium of India International Centre, New Delhi.

The stories I chose to perform that day were from the 'Tilism-e Hoshruba', the most popular section of the long Dastan-e Amir Hamza. These mainly recounted the antics of Amar, Hamza's trickster in chief. He encounters sorcerers who are very powerful but come unstuck before the wiliness of the *aiyyar*s (tricksters), who can cross dress and seduce them to fatal effect.

My first partner Himanshu and I rehearsed it somewhat like a theatre piece, meeting everyday and also frequently reciting it in front of S R Faruqi. Anusha Rizvi, was looking after the sets and décor and we decided to opt for a white *angarkha* (tunic of a specific style), a 19th century outfit. Unlike other forms of storytelling there was no music, no visuals and no props except for a couple of *katora*s (bowls) for us to

drink water from. In the audience, there were a number of Urdu writers and journalists, apart from some theatre goers. What was brought amply home was the vitality of the texts and their ability to regale the contemporary audiences.

In 2006, after a year of performing Dastangoi, my new partner Danish Husain joined me. Since then, over two hundred shows have taken place in several cities in India and abroad. About 20 people have joined me on this journey, including professional actors, lawyers, academic scholars and engineers. A book of stories will soon be published in Hindi.

Revival or Re-invention?

The present day revival of Dastangoi is, in fact, not a revival at all. It is a reinvention of the art of Dastangoi, or even a reincarnation. We have very scanty information about the practice of the art, or the texts produced by the practice that have been honed over generations and decades. So we do not know much about the way it was practiced at its zenith. The traditional dastangos performed at salons, gatherings and sometimes in public spaces, while we mostly perform in auditoria or similar proscenium spaces. The traditional art rested mainly on recitation, our performances require lighting and sound systems so our faces, eyes and expressions become equally important. In the past it was a solo performance whereas now it requires two performers.

Barriers

Most critically, in the past the audiences knew the stories and the language beforehand, they were already familiar with all the tracks so each new episode could be tagged to their knowledge. When we perform now we have to acquaint them with the whole tradition and then relate the story. Like poetry, the story does not stand alone but in a dialogue with all the stories that have gone before. It is a bit like telling an episode of the 'Mahabharat' to an audience who knows nothing about the epic.

We are left then to relating strange stories in a strange language and in a strange form. As a general rule, people who know Urdu do not come to the theatre and those who come to the theatre do not know Urdu. Who watches us then and why? And can our performance be defined as a form of theatre? Comprehensibility works at several levels in our performances. When we perform we have to make sure we are illustrating the action with the use of gestures, voice and expressions. The audience may not understand every word in a line but as long as they are willing to go with the tone we are fine with it. Lack of Urdu does not always result in a standard response. In selecting stories from the oeuvre we must choose the humorous ones that can regale and entertain the audience. We can't afford to delve into a 10 page description of a garden or sing out the musical wars between *dhobi*s (washer-men) and *bhishti*s (water carriers).

Language

The stories are told in an ornate language. It could be highly Persian-ised or very colloquial but in either case it is unlikely to make sense to contemporary Indian audiences. Why must we persist with the difficult and somewhat anti-democratic language? The stories created by the master tellers in the language they chose are their work. We cannot simply separate their language from their content, the form from its casing. Moreover, even if irregularly understood it is still beautiful to hear. There is an aural quality to languages that needs to be centre-staged in today's visual culture. Moreover, for the last 60 years Urdu has faced a relentless pressure, even a command, to simplify itself. All across, people feel the need to gloss what they are saying, including *qawwal*s (singers of Sufi devotional music) and poets. By refusing to submit to this diktat, we are asserting Urdu's right to be and giving the audience a taste of a language that has been eroded, marginalised and even emasculated. We want to assert that this is a beautiful language; if you don't understand, it is your loss. It is the creation of a politics of longing for a language.

Contemporary themes

We resist the demand to become more contemporary, to do topical stories. A story and a form that has been marginalised due to cultural politics, acquires political overtones when done in the present. Our work is an act of cultural contestation and when we perform lost stories; stories of adventure, magic, trickery, seduction, wining and battles, in our times, they *ipso facto* become topical and contemporary. They have been marginalised in the Urdu world as well as from the arena of performing arts. It is a political act to put them back in that arena.

There are stories that are meant only and purely to be enjoyed and joy itself is political at a time when all art must be useful. What is the point of Classical Music? What good does a Faiyyaz Khan do to society? Why should Dastangoi be useful? Isn't it enough that it can make the audience forget their world for an hour or two? Nevertheless, over the past years, I have used the

Mahmood Farooqui and Danish Husain performing a Dastan

form to create other stories. There are so many stories to tell that one can't restrict oneself to only certain types of stories. These include stories from other regions of the long Indian medieval past and stories from the variegated medievalised-moderns of South Asia that are crying out for tellers.

Dastangoi presentations around the Partition of India and around the trial and incarceration of the human rights advocate Binayak Sen have proved very popular. In these presentations, we sometimes use the tropes of the older stories, *tilism* (magical effect or artifact created by the sorcerer) and *aiyyari* (chicanery, trickery and disguise) and sometimes we fashion entirely new narratives.

Creating a text for Dastangoi is very different from creating a play or a story to be read. A Dastangoi narrative is meant to be performed. It acquires its unity from the performance, not from what is on the page. In performance, changes of tone, of character, events, situations, everything remains under the control of the teller. I am still trying to determine whether Dastangoi is a form of theatre or something separate from that. There is drama there for sure and many people refer to it as a play too but is it theatre?

Recently I adapted the famous Rajasthani folk tale 'Chauboli' into a Dastangoi performance. The story itself had been put to paper by the Rajasthani folklorist Vijay Dan Detha from an oral version in the Rajasthani language. I then drew on an English translation of that to render the text in colloquial Urdu. It was our first ticketed show in Delhi and the overwhelming response of the audience reaffirmed my faith in our form and our ability to tell a great variety of stories. I have also adapted Tagore's novel Ghare Baire in a dastan form which will premiere at the 'Happenings Rabindrotsav' in Calcutta in January 2012. Using this form, we can tell stories of many different kinds. Medieval folk stories, epics, modern-day novels, political stories, everything depends on the ingenuity of the teller. But ours is a more formal art of storytelling than somebody just sitting down or standing up and telling stories. We must formalise and make the presentation ceremonial.

DASTANGOI: NEW DIRECTIONS

Now, I would like the art form to move out of the comfort of a proscenium space and return to the street where it belongs. The stories are such that they can appeal to all kinds of Indians, the English speaking as well as illiterate peasants. Also, the linguistic anarchy of North India means that a lot of our medieval literature is today lost to us. Nobody can understand as seminal a text as 'Ram Charit Manas' of Tulsidas. Few understand Kabir's poetry or the legendary Krishna *bhakti* (devotion) of Surdas.

Dastangoi has the ability to tap into these poetries and traditions and bring them alive on the stage. It can renew our acquaintance with our own pasts. In times to come I hope this dialogue with our pasts and with other inhabitants of our part of the world will continue. The stories created by the dastangos of the past embody an attitude to life which is now lost to us. Body, bawdiness, humour, adventure, social stratification, the pre-modern gender divisions[3], music, songs, nature, attitude to sex and religion have all undergone significant transformations in the last century and a half. The dastans then become the repository of our past and when presented to today's audiences these fantasies create a narrative that is independent of modernity and yet funny and fantasy-like to appeal to us. It is a mode of entertainment that is indigenous and its appeal transcends class divisions. It is a preservation of modes of listening, reciting, regalement and imagination.

Beyond the Object
Changing museum discourse

MARIE EVE CELIO-SCHEURER AND MOE CHIBA

ABSTRACT

The adoption of UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 has widened the concept of heritage by putting across two new dimensions: heritage as living tradition and community as owner of heritage. Safeguarding of intangible heritage requires a much more complex exercise than preservation of physical objects as its survival relies utterly on human interaction: guru or knowledge holders; disciples or young generation to inherit the know-how and finally the community as a whole that would support and give meaning to the inter-generational transmission of traditional knowledge and practices.

While the museums have the mission, amongst others, to preserve cultures, to what extent and in which ways can they contribute to this human process underlying the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage?

Would it be possible for the museums to accommodate some of the key notions of the UNESCO Convention such as 'living heritage' or 'community ownership' and even a concept such as 'intangible cultural heritage' as source of community sustainable development'?

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INTRODUCTION: INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

'By plucking her petals, you don't gather the beauty of the flower.'

- Rabindranath Tagore (1916, verse 154)

The adoption of the International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 by the General Conference of UNESCO marked an important turning-point. It filled a gap in the legal system of international cultural heritage protection, which hitherto had focused exclusively on safeguarding the tangible heritage. The Convention was novel because it put across two new dimensions: heritage as living tradition and the community as owner of heritage. Intangible cultural heritage includes, oral tradition, performing arts, rituals, festivals, knowledge on nature and traditional craftsmanship.[1] Safeguarding of intangible heritage requires a much more complex exercise than the preservation of physical objects, because its survival relies entirely on human interaction: guru or knowledge holders; disciples or young generation who inherit the know-how and finally the community as a whole that would support and give meaning to the inter-generational transmission of traditional knowledge and practices.

In October 2002, one year before the adoption of the Convention, the International Council Of Museum (ICOM) already adopted the Shanghai Charter at its seventh Regional Assembly of ICOM Asia-Pacific Regional Alliance, recommending the establishment of 'interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial approaches that bring together movable and immovable, tangible and intangible, natural and cultural heritage' and to 'develop documentation tools and standards in establishing holistic museum and heritage practices'. In 2004, 'Museums and Intangible Heritage' was the theme of ICOM's General Conference in Seoul, following which ICOM decided to bring the 'International Journal of Intangible Heritage'[2], confirming growing interest of the museum practitioners to embrace the notion of intangible cultural heritage and to contribute to its safeguarding.

It was only in 2003 that intangible cultural heritage became the subject of international legally binding instrument, the principal issues hailed in the Convention, namely the non-material aspects of cultures, community ownership and culture as a source of local sustainable development, have been the concern of the museum world since at least the 1960's and was part of the quest of the museum professionals to gain new identity and relevance in society.

Because museums have to preserve cultural heritage as one of their missions, the question that arises is: to what extent and in what ways can they contribute to this human process underlying the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage? Would it be possible for the museums to accommodate some of the key notions of the UNESCO Convention such as 'living heritage' or 'community ownership' and even the concept of 'intangible cultural heritage' as a source of community's sustainable development? How can the intangible cultural heritage be safeguarded by museums and how can museums re-inject it into life? Isn't there a risk for museums to fossilise a living and evolving tradition, by trying to safeguard it?

MUSEUMS: A FEW MILESTONES

Overview of origin and evolution of the 'Museum'

The word 'museum' etymologically comes from the Greek 'museion', which means 'Temple of the Muses, deities of the arts'. It is learnt that during the Renaissance, in Italy notably, the galleries storing artefacts were called museums, as these galleries were inhabited by the Muses. In the second half of the 15th century, the word museum appeared in its Latin form, 'museum' and took its modern sense as a place where works of art are collected and shown to the public, mostly a private group invited by the prince. It is only in the 18th century that the museum became a public establishment, as we know it today. This evolution from private to public is linked with the Enlightenment in Europe (Cabinets of Curiosities) and with the French Revolution in France. Museums became a place where the collections of the nobles and the treasures of the churches had to be shown to the large public and turned into public institutions where a collection of objects embracing beauty and knowledge were accessible to everyone.

In the 19th century museums moved toward specialisation. Notably, there was a strong interest for archaeology and antiquity, in particular for the Greek and Oriental archaeology. With the growth of industry, museums became a place to display the industrial products which were exhibited in World Fairs and the so-called museums of applied art. Heirs of the Cabinets of Curiosities, ethnographic museums have also emerged during this period, when the ethnography itself became an independent discipline in the mid-19th century. This specialisation of the museums in the 19th

century led to today's five main common categories: art museums, historical museums, museums of science, museums of technology and museums of ethnology.

In the 20th century, museums were established all over the world, not only in western countries, but also in eastern countries. In the former, museums were the subject of criticism: accused of being old- fashioned, backward- looking and of not showing the present art as well as the artistic evolution. The new currents were hardly represented in the museums' collections, the living artists were not presented either. Thus came the idea of creating museums of modern art. Besides, the museum practices inherited from the 19th century were not responding to the contemporary aesthetic any more, with crowded showcases and paintings hanging side by side on two, three or four levels. The new criteria were to highlight a few artefacts and to store the others in the reserve. This led to a new organisation of the museum space, with galleries to present permanent and temporary exhibitions, as well as the reserve to store the artefacts.

Therefore, to deal with the questions of the museums, their architecture, conservation of the objects, restoration, the museums slowly became professionalised, offering a wide range of professions, such as director, curator, restorer, librarian, scenographer, designer, technician, photographer and more recently information technology specialist and they organised the professions related to museums on an international level. This is why, in 1926, the League of Nations created the International Museums Office (IMO), which published the periodical 'Mouseion' and the monograph series 'Museographie'. IMO also organised international conferences on subjects of importance for the international museum community. In 1934, the IMO held an international conference in Madrid in order to define some rules related to the architecture, the fitting and the design of the art museums, to be soon published in a manual. In 1946, IMO ceased its functions with the creation of a new international organisation related to the museums called the International Council of Museums (ICOM), founded under the auspices of UNESCO.

Museums: in educational and socio-economical role

From 1948 to 1966, ICOM was led by Georges-Henri Rivière, who was the founder of the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions[3]. Georges-Henri Rivière, along with Hugues de Varine, were in favour of a new museology that makes museums play a new role in social development and not merely limited to the conservation of the past. This redefined the role of a museum in society, from being elitist to becoming more people-oriented. The open-air museums belong to this development and can be considered the heirs of the ethnographic museums. The idea was that these establishments could express and represent the diversity of a culture and affirm the identity of an ethnical or social community, regrouping around a territory or an agricultural or industrial activity.

Later on, in 1985, the movement led to the creation of an association of museum workers called the International Movement for New Museology (MINOM). The movement advocated that a museum is not to be object-oriented but people and activity oriented. Museums are seen as educational spaces that can have an active role in development. Members of the communities are seen as resources and experts in their own cultures. Community and identity have thus become important key words of museum circles.

The movement has led to the creation of a number of community museums across the world. The concept is particularly popular in Latin America and Africa, where there has been an increasing demand from indigenous communities about how they and their cultures were represented and displayed, reflecting their quest to gain new or reinvented identity in the post-colonial era, and now living under the impact of globalisation.

The 20th century is also marked by the creations, extensions or renovations of museums with the assistance of renowned architects. Some of the examples include the exhibition gallery of the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, built by Frank Lloyd Wright that was completed in New York in 1959 and the Centre Georges Pompidou, created by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers that opened in Paris in 1977. Besides, old buildings were also renovated and transformed into museums, such as the Musée d'Orsay in Paris that opened to the public in 1986. It was originally a railway station built for the Universal Exhibition in 1900 and was transformed from a station into a museum by ACT architecture group, made up of M Bardon, M Colboc and M Philippon.

These 'new' museums act like cultural centres. Beyond the permanent or temporary exhibitions galleries, they offer research possibilities, documentations, restorations, libraries, auditoriums, audio-visual rooms, pedagogical ateliers, shops, cafés, restaurants and commercial galleries, with the goal of attracting more and more visitors. Bringing cultural entertainment,

Gond dancers from Chhattisgarh at the Crafts Museum in New Delhi. Source: Pradip Dalal

pedagogy and consumption together, these museums respond to the desire of our contemporary society, especially from the developed economies, to spend more money for culture and leisure. Observing the great potential of museums to stimulate local economy, new museums were created away from the metropolis to revitalise the economical activity of a territory, such as the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the Tate in Liverpool, the Louvre in Lens or the Pompidou in Metz.

Museums have therefore acquired many functions. From their initial mandate of collecting, protecting, keeping, maintaining, restoring, inventorying and presenting artefacts, they have now evolved to also play a pedagogical and a socio-economic role.

Intangible cultural heritage and museums

Well before the adoption of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in 2003, museum professionals were aware that there is a knowledge which goes beyond the tangible, that objects are not static and don't have a meaning by themselves. The UNESCO Convention marks a legal response in the face of growing globalisation impacting on local traditional cultural expressions.

Today, museums across the world are experimenting with different ways of integrating the tangible and the intangible. The concept of community participation is gaining ground across the world. It is now common to add audio-visual elements to give life to the artefacts to help visitors imagine the objects outside the museum's environment.

In Mexico, the Union of Community Museums of Oaxaca, is one of the well-cited examples of museums that is led by local indigenous communities as a tool to regain their collective identity and also to contribute to local development through promotion of tourism.[4] Besides, the recent publication by UNESCO identifies a number of emerging community museum initiatives in Asia.[5]

Among many museums in Switzerland, one could mention the Museo Onsernonese that started its activities in 1966, supported by local promoters to respond to the danger of seeing the traditions of the Valley Onsernone disappear. The aim was to safeguard and promote the historical, cultural and ethnographical heritage of this region. In 1991, the Museo Onsernonese restored and re-activated the 18th century water mill in Loco, so that the unique and traditional procedure of moulding the sweet corn would not disappear. By doing

so, the museum succeeded in not only safeguarding a local industrial activity, but also involved the villagers. The flour is sold at the Museo Onsernone. Besides, an exhibition related to the valley is presented inside the watermill.[6]

Museum Rietberg in Zurich, through its recent exhibition 'Der Weg des Meisters - Die grossen Künstlers Indiens, 1100-1900'[7] offers an interesting attempt to contextualise the scenes and to give life to the paintings by presenting a movie made by the Indian director Amit Dutta, in collaboration with the painting specialist Eberhard Fischer (Beach *et al.* 2011).[8] Some museums, also experiment with exhibitions on subjects that are intangible, such as the actual exhibition 'Bruits' that means noises, presented at the Museum of ethnography of Neuchâtel (Gonseth *et al*. 2011).[9]

In India, museums, especially the public ones, still and largely reflect the colonial set-up where most of them were established and are less flexible to changes. Nonetheless, one can see a growing attempt to diversify the activities of museums and a willingness to encompass intangible cultural heritage.

From public museums, one obvious example which comes to mind is the 'National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum' in New Delhi, spreading over five acres. Commonly called the 'Crafts Museum', this important institution, directed previously by Dr. Jyotindra Jain and presently by Dr. Ruchira Ghose, is home to about 33, 000 artefacts.[10] Started in the 1950s, it is currently under the Ministry of Textiles. The actual museum was elaborated by the architect Charles Correa, based on the artisans' vernacular architectural setting. The spaces are organised around a central pathway, going from village to temple to palace, as a metaphor of the Indian traditional habitat. What is especially interesting regarding the question of intangible cultural heritage is the crafts demonstration area of the museum where artists and artisans from various parts of India can perform and sell their products directly to the visitors, who can see how the products are made and can engage in discussions with the artists and artisans.

'Symposium on the living Traditions of Mahabharata', held from February 10-16, 2011, organised by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is another attempt to combine culture, entertainment, pedagogy and marketing of folk arts and crafts. In addition to the exhibition, academic sessions, life demonstrations, literary readings and film shows, the event was completed by a month- long 'ustav' from February 10 to March 10, 2011, with music and dance performances, food stalls and artisans who were demonstrating and selling their crafts.

Interesting case studies of community participation can be found among the work of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Although not led by local communities as such, Kala Raksha Museum in Kutch, Gujarat, offers an interesting example of a museum dedicated primarily to serve local embroiders' community by archiving, researching and offering documentation on traditional embroidery motifs and techniques that local artisans themselves have forgotten. Banglanatak dot com, a Kolkata-based NGO specialised in culture-based rural development, has recently created six community resource centres in six villages of West Bengal, known for particular local art forms. The community centres are maintained and run by village artists themselves as place of performance or display of their artistic work and to provide accommodation to visitors wishing to experience village life with local communities. These resource centres cannot be equated with museums, but nonetheless are an interesting attempt at retrieving community ownership over their own heritage.

To safeguard intangible cultural heritage, ensuring the livelihood of practitioners is a condition. In that perspective, two more initiatives are noteworthy: one in Kothwara near Lucknow, with Meera and Muzzaffar Ali and one in Maheshwar with Richard Holkar. In both examples, we can observe old royalties intending to safeguard the heritage and traditions of Lucknow and Maheshwari, by opening their residences to the public, creating schools for the local communities, offering a high quality production of traditional handicrafts and organising cultural events. In both cases, activities go beyond museum building and use the entire historical city as a setting.

These examples invite us to reflect on what is a museum today, what belongs to the heritage realm, what has to be safeguarded and how. The institutional definition of a museum that restricts it to the preservation of objects, is exploding. We have, therefore, to reflect on which memory we would like to safeguard and how.

CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage does not only include tangible expressions, such as objects and monuments, it also

embraces the living ones, such as the traditions which have been passed down from generation to generation. As this heritage is mostly transmitted orally, it is fragile and can very easily become oblivious. Cultural value and need for preservation places intangible heritage within the purview and core mandate of museums.

By presenting a short historical overview, this article has shed light on the evolving nature of museums; from object-centric and elitist institutions to, more recently, multi-layered bodies, intricately interacting with society. Intangible heritage is a relatively new focus and its integration within existing museums calls for a redefinition of roles and approaches. It presents tremendous promises and potential, but also raises questions on the role and the definition of museums. Innovative strategies have already been devised by museums around the world. Community participation could be a key pathway through integration of intangible heritage in museums. In this respect, various initiatives by NGOs and individuals offer an interesting source of inspiration.

In India, most museums are still struggling with the establishment of proper modes of preservation and conservation of tangible heritage. Though this might be thought as a first necessary step before addressing intangible heritage, not being moulded into a strongly established tradition of preserving artefacts might actually be an opportunity rather than a handicap to adopt an innovative approach integrating tangible and intangible.

But, one has to stay modest and keep in mind that by trying to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage, museums will only be 'plucking' some 'petals' and not 'gather the beauty of the flower', to take up the words by Tagore. To conclude with Rumi's wisdom (Harvey 1999): 'The branch might seem like the fruit's origin: In fact, the branch exists because of the fruit.'[11]; intangible cultural heritage could be just like a fruit, the museums only some branches.

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Notes

[1] The UNESCO Convention defines intangible cultural heritage as follows:
(….) the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith– that communities, groups, and in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity (…) ' (Article 2.1). Intangible cultural heritage is manifested in various domains, such as: 'oral traditions and expressions, including language (…); performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship' (Article 2.2).

[2] This journal is defined as 'an academic and professional journal dedicated to the promotion of the understanding of every aspect of intangible heritage worldwide'. Refer to <http://icom.museum/what-we-do/programmes/intangible-heritage.http>.

[3] Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, located at 6, avenue du Mahatma Gandhi, Paris.

[4] Union de Museos Coso munitarios (Union of Community Museums) in Oaxaca, Mexico, founded in 1991 with the help of Union de Museos and the national anthropology organisation in Mexico (INAH) is a network of 14 indigenous and mixed-race communities in Oaxaca, having established their own community museums. The main tenet of the organisation is that the museums should be created by the communities themselves so as to affirm its possession of its own patrimony. Source: Museos communitarios, <http://www.museoscomunitarios.org/>.

[5] Community-Based Approach to Museum Development in Asia and the Pacific for Culture and Sustainable Development, UNESCO, Paris, 2010.

[6] See <http://www.onsernone.ch>.

[7] The 40 Greatest Masters of Indian Painting.

[8] The movie 'Nainsukh' was previously shown at the Venice Film Festival in 2010. The film presented at the exhibition at the Rietberg. Nainsukh was the greatest Indian painter of the 18th century and he is the first Indian painter whose biography has been made into a film. To know more about the Museum Rietberg, see <www.rietberg.ch>.

[9] To know more about the Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel (MEN), see <www.men.ch>.

[10] Mainly Indian crafts in a variety of media such as clay, wood, cotton, silk, cane, bamboo and metal.

[11] Quoting Rumi (Harvey 1999):
…The branch might seem like the fruit's origin:
In fact the branch exists because of the fruit.
Would the gardener have planted the tree at all
Without a desire and hope for fruit?
That's why the tree is really born from the fruit.
Even if it seems the fruit is created by the tree.
The idea that comes first comes last in realisation
Particularly the idea which is eternal.

Living Museums
Understanding our urban spaces

HIMANSHU VERMA'S PERSPECTIVE
BY PARUL MUNJAL AND RAMA LAKSHMI

ABSTRACT

In most Western cities, informal markets are seen as contributors to the vibrancy and culture. In India, these are perceived as urban eyesores that have to be 'dealt' with. The three informal flower markets of Delhi, like living museums, had deep historical and cultural roots to the sites, harboured skills and enabled the continuity of traditions and provided a source of livelihood for several thousands. An attempt was made by the Genda Phool Project to expand the meaning and relevance of the markets and rescue them from being relocated to the outskirts of the city. But the eventual removal of the markets reemphasises the urgent need to debate what constitutes and how to preserve urban cultural identity and assets.

INFORMAL MARKETS AND THE CITY

In the rapidly transforming Indian cities, there are still some corners that have not given way to flyovers, malls, multiplexes and condominiums. As India considers corporatising retail, an old way of life is likely to erode away. Lying at the cusp of change are informal markets that provide livelihood to a large population of urban poor and migrants.

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The bustling Connaught Place flower market. Source: Adil Hasan

Bengali flower sellers selling Calcutta genda garlands at the Connaught Place flower market. Source: Nancy Kapoor

Informal market activity includes vending on mobile carts and street vending on fixed locations or as part of weekly markets. The National Policy for Urban Street Vendors recognises street vending as an age old profession in India.[1] Despite this, in the past decade, we wish to imagine our cities without these organic economic activities; indeed many would consider them aesthetically dispensable, in the rush toward urban renewal and organised retail spaces. But, not only are these activities central to a city's growth, they also form part of a city's undying identity and history, giving each city its very own unique character and charm. The same space undergoes different uses at different time periods within a day. Would this not be a good example of efficient usage of urban space?

In many Western cities today, flea markets and open bazaars are making a comeback and are a symbol of ethnic diversity and community rebuilding. Such markets in London, Paris and New York are functioning legally and are cherished for what they contribute to the city's culture.

Why is there a negative bias in modern Indian planning against such spaces? Why are the vendors regarded as encroachers? We need to look deeper into the entire informal economy set up because this is our intangible, unbroken urban heritage.

THE FLOWER MARKETS OF NEW DELHI

The three flower markets of Delhi represented informal markets that were not only a source of livelihood for many but also lent vibrancy to the city. The Fatehpuri market was the oldest; being about 70-80 years old, while the Connaught Place (CP) and Mehrauli markets were about 20 years old.

Connaught Place Flower Market

The CP Flower Market was located at the heart of the Capital, opposite Hanuman Mandir, on land owned by New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). The unique characteristic of this *mandi* (market) was that it used to operate from around 4 AM to 9 AM and accomplished business worth millions in this short duration. It used

to bring in flowers from all over the country and indeed the world. The flash- in- the - pan phenomenon; here now, gone in a second, was fascinating. The place used to be cleaned up and emptied before the shops and offices opened and the city woke up. Everything was swept magically clean in 15 minutes. Arguably Asia's largest flower market in terms of volume of business, this was India's largest and specialised largely in cut flowers of all varieties and even some dry flowers and flower decoration equipments. It had a vantage point, being close to the New Delhi railway station and well-linked to the airport too. It got roses and carnations from Bangalore, genda or marigold and decorative materials such as the bark of *khajoor* (date) tree from Kolkata and exquisite flowers even from European countries like Holland.

Fatehpuri Flower Market

The Fatehpuri Flower Market was set in Old Delhi, next to Chandni Chowk, located adjacent to Fatehpuri Mosque and the spice market, on land owned by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).This was also a temporary market. Farmers, agents and flower sellers were seen milling around in the wee hours of the morning and by around 9 AM the *mandi* vanished, making way for the spice market. This *mandi* mostly sold genda in loose form and functioned as a master supplier to other *mandi*s, florists, small flower sellers and garland makers outside temples in the city. They also sold leaves of *Saraca Indica*, known as Ashoka tree and local varieties of the rose. The market was situated near Sadar Bazaar railway station, which is a stop for the Delhi Ring Railway service and Old Delhi railway station that gets trains from all over India. Farmers from areas surrounding Delhi such as Palwal, came to this market to sell their produce.

Mehrauli Flower Market

The Mehrauli Flower Market was located next to the Qutb Minar and Mehrauli Archaeological Park and is allocated for use as a parking lot as per the master plan. This all day open market specialised in not only loose genda, but also garlands and some cut flowers. In the morning, people would come in buses, autos and tempos to supply flowers. Farmers brought their produce in, at an interval of four to five days, from neighbouring states, especially during festive seasons. Some flower sellers of Mehrauli would also go to buy loose genda from Fatehpuri. 20-25% cut flowers used to come in from CP while seasonal flowers such as sweet williams and local varieties of rose would come in from farms in and around Chattarpur and south of Delhi, areas that surround Mehrauli.

Social and economic perspective

The three markets represented a diverse cultural mix, with Hindu and Muslim[2], local and migrant, educated and illiterate, rich and poor, all involved in the trade in various ways. There was a well-oiled machinery of multiple players and economic agents functioning in these markets:

- Farmer, who would come and sells directly in the morning hours. His main concern was to sell the produce and return to the hinterland as quickly as possible.
- *Masakhor* (middle man) who would buy from the farmer and sell at a premium to other customers through the day. He dealt in loose flowers only.

Friends and families involved in making garlands, one of the many activities associated with the flower markets that functioned as socio-cultural entities. Source: Mehar Jyrwa

Yellow/basanti gulaal

Maroon/Bhagwa gulaal

Orange/Narangi gulaal

Rose genda mix gulaal

Triple genda mix gulaal

Seedy gulaal

Gulaal made from flowers with varying colour and consistency

- Commission agent who had a shop and was more permanent that *masakhor*s. The *masakhor*s would sometimes depend on the commission agent to give them space for selling and used to give commission of their profit to the agent.
- Other shop keepers who did not deal with *masakhor*s, especially in case of processed flowers. They employed people to make garlands from surrounding areas such as the Mehrauli Village.
- Local buyers that included retailers as well as direct consumers.

According to some estimates, about five thousand people were involved in the trade, including those employed to make garlands. There were many others such as labourers, transporters and those running tea and food stalls in the vicinity, who used to depend on the flower markets.

The markets grew organically at the three sites. Flowers are an integral part of rituals and offerings made at temples, mosques and other holy sites. The Fatehpuri market was located next to the Fatehpuri Mosque, the CP market opposite the Hanuman Mandir and the Mehrauli market was in one of the oldest cities of Delhi, also blessed with Sufi and Hindu spiritual heritage. The CP and Fatehpuri markets reflected multiple and efficient use of urban spaces. These were indigenous, innovative solutions developed by the market forces and communities involved in the trade and added value to the texture and vibrancy of the city.

The traditional occupation of a *mali* (gardener) was also associated with making garlands out of flowers here. The colours and fragrances that floated in the market all day was a cultural and sensual asset. A number of cultural associations and linkages developed between the location and morphology of these markets and their surroundings over time that contributed to the weft and warp of this living unorganised Indian capital.

CHANGE: DEVELOPMENT OR SENSELESSNESS?

Making Delhi a 21st century world-class city is a vision that development authorities aim to achieve through implementation of planning instruments such as master plans. If urgent attention is not paid, these can pose a serious threat and alienation that can result in loss of living, breathing organic spaces in the city. The city's neighbourhoods are losing their interconnected parts and being replaced by new gated communities and high-rise structures. Our development process needs to strive to maintain the uniqueness of a city and should not make one city a clone of the other.

While some would look at the flower markets as cultural institutions, others regarded these as a source of nuisance, congestion and unhygienic conditions. In 1995, a resident filed a suit against the NDMC for allowing the CP Flower Market to run in the morning hours. This started the process of questioning the presence of the flower markets. Gradually the case

came to involve all three markets and the flower market owners and unions started asking for organised space where they could operate without the trouble of working in the early hours. They were given licenses to operate in the Okhla Flower Market. The 500 license holders were only given about 200 shops and this gave rise to bargaining for bigger space by two main sellers from the CP Flower Market, who were most powerful leaders. According to some flower sellers[3], these people misled the government to believe that they could build an export centre in the outlying area of Ghazipur. But ironically, most of the export-worthy flowers are grown around Bangalore. Only marigold is grown around Delhi and that is not exported. When the flowers come from Bangalore, two days are lost in the process. The other two markets were not being represented. As a result of this negotiation, the government decided to give space for the flower market in Ghazipur on the outskirts of the city that is a landfill, a huge heap of waste visible from a kilometre away, with birds of prey circling above it. Poultry, fish and vegetable markets have already been moved there. Land is usually contaminated in such areas, harming food-based industries. The vegetable market is functioning and right next to it on the highway is a board saying, 'Welcome to Flower Trade Centre'.

This push to Ghazipur has emerged as a metaphor for the obsession to organise things without carrying out appropriate stakeholder consultations and impact studies. In this process, it is clear that local needs have not been addressed, all stakeholder segments have not been represented and even market analysis has not been carried out. If the demand for flowers is local, why should the flower markets be pushed out of the city? It may work for bulk orders, but it will not be worthwhile for the small retailers to go all the way to Ghazipur.

The government set up the Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board, the Flower marketing Committee and formulated *The Delhi Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act 1998,* to regulate the market of agricultural produce and safeguard the interests of producers, sellers and consumers by providing a transparent system of trade. But the move to Ghazipur appears to contradict these initiatives.
As of September 2011, all the three markets have been removed from their locations in the city. It is important to note how this has affected the involved participants. Possible impacts include addition of more intermediaries between the farmer and the consumer, resulting in the flowers becoming more expensive. How will the farmers sell their produce? Will they go to Ghazipur? The whole process of organising seems to be making the rich richer and the powerful even more so. The poor participants in the trade used to live around or in the flower markets. Can they afford to spend time and money in the commute to Ghazipur or will they be forced to leave the flower trade and look for work in unrelated areas?

All types of gulaal made of dried marigold petals, packaged in a set of six tea glasses for retail. Source: Supriya Consul

THE GENDA PHOOL PROJECT

The 'Genda' flower

The Portuguese brought the seed of Genda to India from Mexico in the17th century. Aztecs called it the flower of the dead and thought it to be invested with magical powers. In the Indian context the bright colour signifies positive energies and the spirit of celebration. It is equated with the complexity and zest of a family, sung in a popular folk song from Chhattisgarh.[4] It had a close connection with spirituality and signifies multiple layers of meaning.[5]

The Genda Phool Project was started in the spring of 2010, as a celebration of the Marigold flower through many means such as planting, art and music. Ahead of the XIX Commonwealth Games in October 2010, a number of infrastructure development and beautification works were being undertaken in Delhi. As a part of the Genda Phool Project, the initial plan was to spread more flowers all over the city through plantation, a purpose that would outlive the Games. But, the knowledge that the markets were proposed to be relocated turned it in to a campaign to save the

Participants of the guided walks interacting with the sellers at the Fatehpuri market. Source: Mehar Jyrwa

markets with an attempt to document, interact, raise awareness and take legal action. The markets were wiped off the map of the city and relocated, even as the ambitious campaign to save these was just taking off.

Role of exhibitions for the project

The campaign filtered into an art exhibition as an expression of both resistance and celebration. As a part of the Monsoon Festival 2010 that was coordinated by Red Earth, 48 artists worked on the flower theme. The artists generated portraits of flowers, flower sellers and abstract depiction of flowers. These works were exhibited at Alliance Française, New Delhi and two galleries in Lado Sarai in August 2010.

The Walk

As a campaign tool, guided walks of the flower market began in April 2010, scheduled once in a month since then, except in summers. The walks were a way of disseminating information about the markets and the campaign. Conducted from 7 AM to 11 AM, the walk would start at the Market, proceed to Fatehpuri and then to Mehrauli. The Metro rail was used to travel to the market sites. Typical participation involved 10-15 people including expatriates and Indians of all age groups. The people interacted with sellers; bringing in their views and generating live debates. The sellers were amused to see people from other nationalities but they engaged with the visitors and educated them. There was no 'us' versus 'them' relationship. The walkers did not attract too much attention, but would just go around and buy flowers. There was also a plan to develop a flyer for the campaign to give to the participants as take-away material.

Survey and documentation

The informal trading sites were documented with the help of architecture students.[6] The CP Market was mapped and rough maps were developed for the other two markets.[7] Several rounds of photo census were undertaken over a period of months and 40-50 people filled forms in Fatehpuri Market and a few in Mehrauli. The intention was to collate together the data from photo census with the questionnaires and feed into the map, to arrive at an interactive media map. The plan was to use the survey forms as a tool to influence the authorities and courts and to raise awareness amongst the people as well.

Artwork by Manu Parekh

Artwork by Farhan Mujib

Artwork by Mahula Ghosh

As a part of the Monsoon Festival 5, organised by Red Earth, various artists produced artworks inspired by the flowers and flower markets of Delhi

Workshops

The workshop titled 'Hundred things to do with Genda Phool' was devised largely for children, to teach them how to engage with the marigold flower, right from buying genda to making garlands out of it, to drying it to make *gulaal* (dry powder used to play Holi) and paint. The workshop also included teaching how to make paints from vegetables such as spinach and beet root and painting with these, make floral floating decorations, along with singing, dancing and playing genda games. Two such workshops have been conducted till now.

Product development and marketing

The different varieties of marigold flower petals, sourced from the flower markets were dried to make *gulaal* out of it. Novel ways of packaging the *gulaal*, such as in sets of tea glasses, earthen pots and decorative cloth pouches have been tried and the website of Red Earth was used as a marketing medium. Other products such as desk and wall calendars featuring works of artists on the flower theme are also promoted through the website.

Legislative action

Legal intervention is very important to bring about change. The initial idea of the campaign was to organise the people involved in the trade and file a petition on their behalf, on grounds of livelihood. But a number of road blocks came up. Some feared that signing the petition would bring the wrath of the union leaders. The most honest way was thought to be through filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on behalf of the flower market community. Unfortunately, before any such action could be mobilised, the flower markets were removed from their locations, one after the other, from August to September 2011.

CONCLUSION

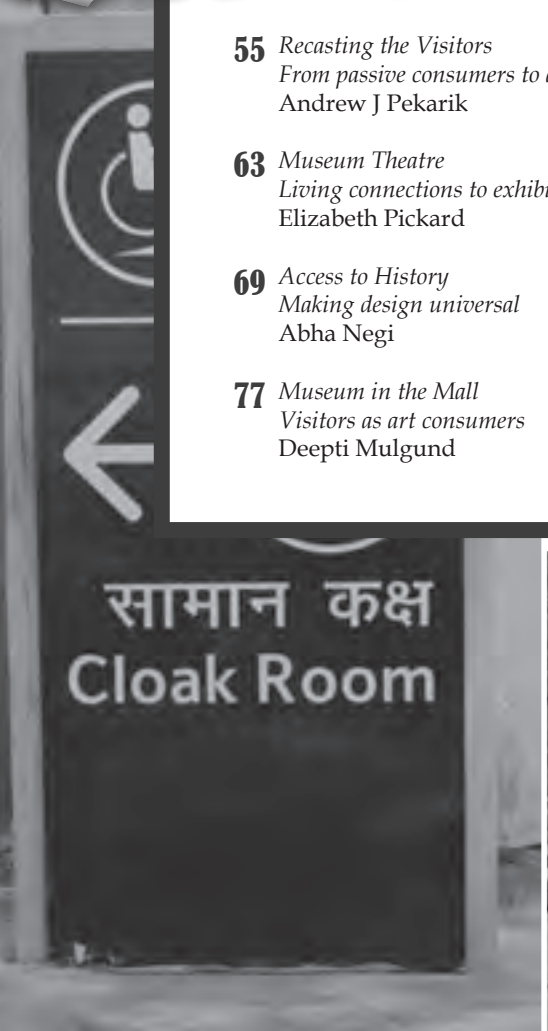
The flower markets of Delhi were its 'living museums' that have been taken apart. Are all such urban assets doomed to the same fate? On one hand, the city's tourism brochures advertise its traditional street food heritage and on the other hand, these very establishments are threatened with relocation.

The 'museum' in a conventional sense, is perceived as a building that houses objects and artefacts that make a valuable cultural contribution to society. But, the museum has various roles to play in India's changing urban context. The museum institution has to adopt innovative ways to preserve, celebrate and interpret the intangible cultural assets as well.

Notes

1. It estimates the number of street vendors in Delhi to be about 200,000. The Policy mentions that 'urban vending is not only a source of employment but provide "affordable" services to the majority of urban population'. Even the Supreme Court has ruled in favour of street vendors and the Article 19(1)g of the Constitution mentions that the right to carry on trade or business on street pavements, if properly regulated cannot be denied on the ground that the streets are meant exclusively for passing or re-passing and no other use.<http://mhupa.gov.in/policies/natpol.htm>
2. In Mehrauli Market, a lot of Muslim population is involved as labourers as well as shop keepers.
3. As per interview with Vivek, a flower seller from upper middle class background for whom it is not a question of livelihood, but still goes to sell at CP Market.
4. As revealed through communication with Rekha Bharadwaj, who sang the song *'Sasural Genda phool'* based on a folk song from Chhattisgarh, that featured in the 2009 Hindi movie 'Delhi 6'.
5. There is a story that due to benevolence of saint Muin-ud-din Chishti the yellow Ajmeri Genda came to exist in the parched land around Ajmer.
6. Bhavika Aggrawal and Uzair Siddiqui from School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi and Anna Zimmer, a friend and volunteer.
7. Most documentation was undertaken during the festive period of nine days known as Chaitra Navratra in April 2011, when flower markets are abuzz with activity and peak in demand.

Museum and Visitors



Recasting the Visitors

From passive consumers to active agents

ANDREW J PEKARIK

ABSTRACT

The standard view of visitors comes from museum staff members who instinctively feel that visitors to their museum are just like them. We will call this the 'inside' perspective. People who work inside the museum feel that exhibitions and programmes they design will be interesting, satisfying, enlightening and inspiring for visitors from outside. However, actual encounters with museum visitors suggest the importance of a second view, which we will call the 'outside' experience. This second view proposes that museum visitors are distinctly different from one another and different as well from the museum staff. They differ in the reasons why they come, what they want from the museum, how they use it and what they get out of their experience. To address these differences, we must consider the possibility that visitors import their own viewpoints from 'outside', that is, from their own lives. This article provides step-by-step suggestions on how to make a museum more responsive to visitor's needs.

HOW CAN A MUSEUM BEST SERVE ITS VISITORS?

I would like to consider the ways that museums can directly serve visitors, that is, those who come to museums voluntarily to engage with

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Recording visitor experiences at National Museum of American History. Source: Howard Morrison

exhibitions or other programmes on-site. Generally speaking there are two sides to the story of museums and their visitors. On the one hand, there is the way that museum staff members tend to conceptualise visitors and on the other hand, the way that visitors see themselves and their experiences in the museum.

The first view of visitors; let's call it the 'inside' perspective, takes the position that the people who go to museums are essentially like those who work in museums. Accordingly, if we, the insiders, set up exhibitions and programmes of the sort that we personally find familiar, interesting, satisfying, enlightening and inspiring, then visitors will have those same experiences, or at least will aspire to having them.

My encounters with museum visitors have led me to appreciate the importance of a second view of visitors; let's call it the 'outside' perspective that starts from the premise that museum goers are distinctly different, not only from one another, but also from the museum staff. They are different in why they come, what they want, how they use the museum and what they get out of it.

Over the last 15 years I have done in depth, open ended interviews with hundreds of visitors to many different Smithsonian Institution museums. Their descriptions of their experiences cover a vast range, from those that nearly duplicate the language and perspective of curators and programme managers to those that are so far from the curatorial perspective that it can be hard to believe that they are in the museum where they are being interviewed.

A critical task for museum staff is to understand these differences and use one's knowledge of these differences to make the museum more effective for more visitors. But how close is this match between what the staff members experience in the museum and what visitors themselves report? Even visitors who do not share the staff perspective are usually willing to tolerate it because of the free choice nature of the encounter. Because visiting is voluntary, visitors remain firmly in charge of their own experience, as they decide which room to enter, where to stop, what to look at, whether to read, how to respond and what to think. Moreover, most museum visitors have had some prior

experience with museums and found that experience satisfying enough that they had the desire to return or to visit another museum.

Museum visiting is a learned behaviour. Museum visitors are those who have figured out how to find personal satisfaction in a museum visit. In other words, they are the ones who were able to make the museum visit align with their personal agendas. In most cases the museum-visitor encounter is driven by visitor agendas, rather than institutional aims and is successful in instances where visitors have deliberately or accidentally found ways of achieving their own aims by making use of what the museum provides.

Most museums that I have visited, whether in America, Europe, the Far East or India, follow the 'inside' model. Personally I believe that this approach is limiting and fails to take full advantage of what is possible. Accordingly, I want to suggest how a museum in India or elsewhere that is currently following the 'inside' model can be transformed into one that follows the 'outside' model. The primary difference is one of starting point; that is, whether one starts with the experience of staff members (inside) or the experience of visitors (outside)?

HOW CAN A MUSEUM CHANGE ITS APPROACH TO VISITORS?

Let us say that one is involved with an existing museum, exhibition or programme that has an insider focus and would like to try out a visitor or user focused approach. How might one proceed? I would like to propose specific, step-by-step suggestions for such a transformation, in the belief that such an approach is more likely to serve a wider range of visitors and needs. For Indian museums it raises the possibility that the audience for museum experiences could be greatly expanded.

Start where you are

It is not uncommon for museum staff to long for audiences that are more diverse, in race or ethnicity, age, education level, gender and so on. Programmatic innovations are often devised specifically to lure the missing demographic. But if change is something added rather than the result of an evolutionary process, it is not likely to be robust or long lasting. I would like to suggest that the best starting place in making a museum more visitor focused is with the audience that the museum already has. In order to become sensitive to visitors' needs, it is essential that the museum develop knowledge and skills that can be deftly and smoothly integrated into programme creation. It will be easiest to do this with the audience that is most available and currently most in tune with what the museum does. If you can figure out how to maximally improve the experience of this audience, you will be ready to create successful programmes for new audiences, as well. Not only is the reverse more difficult, it is also riskier, for the act of directing the museum to new audiences runs the risk of alienating the old audiences on whom the museum has learned to rely and who genuinely benefit from the museum.

Create a programme of study

If one wishes to be responsive to visitors, one first needs to know them well. Museum visitor studies in America began in the early 20th century, but became much more common starting in the 1960s. The models for these studies were drawn primarily from the fields of market research, evaluation and ethnography. Market research inspired demographic surveys and segmentation analysis. These types of studies are meant to align products, in this case museum programmes, with particular audience clusters based on demographic characteristics. The product of such studies is a type of statistical description. Focus groups are another approach drawn from market research, as are customer service scales. More sophisticated statistical methods, common in market research, such as conjoint analysis, are less frequently seen in museum settings and recent market research trends emphasise ethnographic research of everyday life and principles of consumer psychology, although these approaches are very rarely found in the museum world.

The field of evaluation received a great boost in 1960s America with the advent of large government programmes seeking measures of effectiveness. Museum programme evaluation is usually divided into three categories:

- Front-end evaluation - investigations of visitor knowledge or interest regarding a particular topic.
- Formative evaluation - engagement with visitors while a project is still being developed.
- Summative evaluation - a determination of the effect of a programme on its users, especially with respect to intended outcomes.

The ethnographic tradition in museums has primarily focused on observation of museum visitors and interviews with them. While market research and evaluation have been dominated by quantitative methods, the ethnographic approach has favoured

Testing a prototype display at National Museum of American Indian. Source: Alexandra Harris, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

qualitative, that is, non-numerical methods. Typically such studies focus on visitor expectations, responses, social interaction within the museum and the impact (especially longer term) of programmes on the visitor. Museums interested in studying visitors have tended to use a mix of these methods, depending on the specific need. Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, demographic survey studies are particularly good at identifying audience shifts. Focus group studies are very effective at eliciting conventional wisdom. Surveys done within the evaluation tradition are useful ways of proving or disproving hypotheses. In general, ethnographic interviews are the best way of discovering the unexpected. If our goal in conducting studies is to understand visitors better and make their experiences the true focus of the museum, observation and interview methods are more efficient and effective than survey studies.

Challenges in framing a survey

The first problem with any survey study is that it is based in what one already thinks. Questions are invented and phrased from the standpoint of the survey author and reflect what one considers to be established knowledge or meaningful categories. The answers one gets in such a case will tend to confirm the framework that was present at the start. In rare cases, a survey reveals a completely unexpected relationship or association. One will in any event have to resort to other methods to determine where it came from and whether or not it was a statistical accident. A second problem with survey methods is that they tend to narrow one's thinking. The amazing diversity of human feeling and thought is reduced to simplified categories, which, even when they are useful, are never precisely accurate for all people. True understanding, the kind that makes subtle creative responses possible, relies on complexity, not on simplicity. The aim of studying visitors is to 'complexify' one's thinking, to make it rich, subtle, and involved and to grasp the range of differences that visitors bring with them. At some later point surveys will be useful to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses, to clarify patterns and especially to evaluate experiments, but in the beginning all studies should be qualitative.

Meaning-making by visitors and qualitative studies

Qualitative inquiry is the study of how people make meaning. Its aim is always to uncover something that

we don't presently know, something we don't even suspect. Every time this happens, our sense of what is happening is extended and enlivened.

Practically speaking this means that one must start by relying on people who have been trained to observe and carry out ethnographic interviews and who are at ease conducting this kind of open ended investigation into how others think. Such training is not difficult. It requires an instructor who is available to act as a coach, guide and mentor, providing initial instruction and then giving feedback, usually to recorded interviews, as the student practices and develops an individual style.

The process of studying one's visitors works best when those who are responsible for the museum or its programmes accompany the trained interviewers and take notes. After the interviews, the notes can be discussed and analysed. If this is done simultaneously with two or three teams of interviewers and note takers, the subsequent discussion is enriched by a variety of perspectives. If interviews are recorded, excerpts can be shared with other museum staff members, either in text or in audio form. The point of this effort is to get as many people as possible in the museum to see their institution from the visitor perspective. This can be quite enlightening to staff members who have always imagined the visitor as being a certain kind of person responding in a particular way.

This is a very inexpensive activity, once a core group of staff members has been trained to conduct interviews. In practical terms this audience research activity needs to be on a scale that is sustainable over the long term and that will suit the time constraints of very busy museum staff. It is sufficient to set aside two to three hours every other week on a fixed schedule. A very effective starting topic for interviews is to have visitors describe their best museum experiences, either in your institution or elsewhere. This can also be combined with more purposive activities, such as card sorts and responses to images, texts or prototype displays.

Design Research

Once one starts to have a sense of the different ways that visitors respond to the museum, one can propose experiments that are inspired by these new ideas. It might be a new way to present or display material in the museum or a way of working with visitors. One need not be concerned with whether or not others have tried this elsewhere. The point is not really to arrive at some perfect model of a museum, but to continue the effort to understand your visitor, assuming that the visitors at your museum are definitely different from the visitors at other museums.

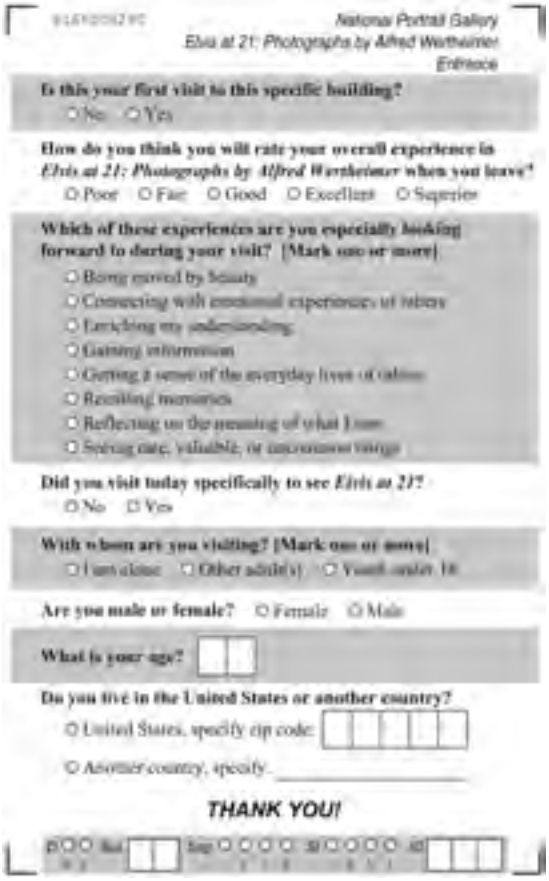
There is a principle known as design research that is very applicable here. Design research involves altering the design of a programme or offering in order to examine how that change affects the thinking and behaviour of participants. It is not aimed at perfecting the programme design, but at using design changes to learn something unexpected about people. Formative evaluation or prototyping by presenting texts, images, displays or other items to visitors in order to gauge their responses, can be a kind of design research if one sees it primarily as a way to understand the different ways that people respond, rather than to come up with a version that is most effective, most amenable or least offensive to the audience. Thus from a design research perspective, it makes perfect sense to 'test' scenarios that you have no intention of producing in full scale. What can you learn from the responses? How can that inspire more ideas and possibilities?

Experimentation

At some point one needs to move from study to action. Understanding will never be complete, so it is sufficient to reach a point where one has gained some insight that feels significant and worth pursuing with a real experiment. If it has derived from the open ended investigation of your audience, it is sure to be revealing, whether it succeeds or fails. If it succeeds, it points the way to more experiments; if it fails, it highlights a gap in understanding that is important and needs investigation.

In my experience museums tend not to value experimentation, because they are naturally conservative institutions with a deep fear of failure

Testing proposed content at National Postal Museum



National Portrait Gallery
Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer
Entrance

Is this your first visit to this specific building?
○ No ○ Yes

How do you think you will rate your overall experience in *Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer* when you leave?
○ Poor ○ Fair ○ Good ○ Excellent ○ Superior

Which of these experiences are you especially looking forward to during your visit? [Mark one or more]
○ Being moved by beauty
○ Connecting with emotional experiences of others
○ Enriching my understanding
○ Gaining information
○ Getting a sense of the everyday lives of others
○ Recalling memories
○ Reflecting on the meaning of what I see
○ Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things

Did you visit today specifically to see *Elvis at 21*?
○ No ○ Yes

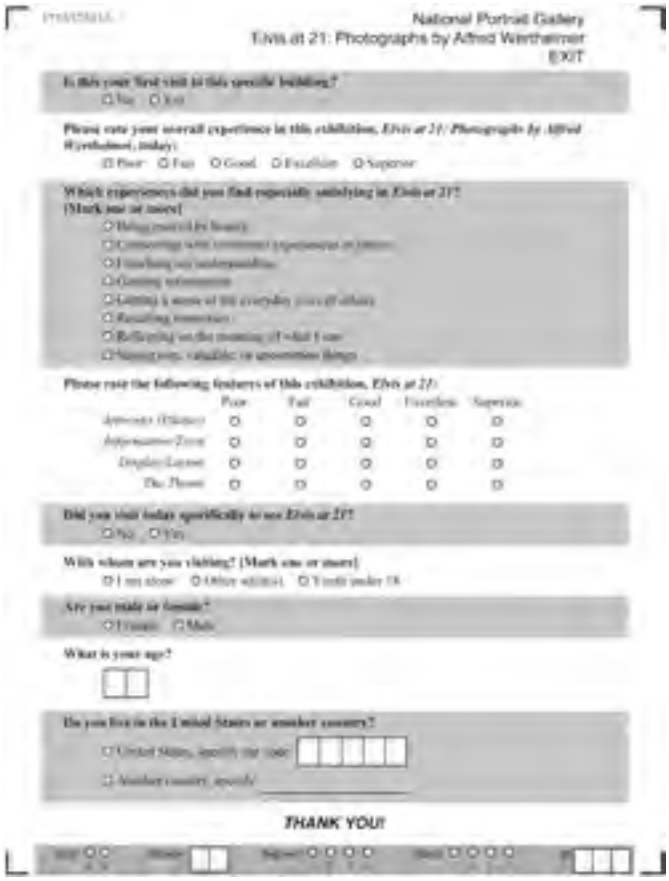
With whom are you visiting? [Mark one or more]
○ I am alone ○ Other adult(s) ○ Youth under 18

Are you male or female? ○ Female ○ Male

What is your age? ☐☐

Do you live in the United States or another country?
○ United States, specify zip code: ☐☐☐☐☐
○ Another country, specify: _____

THANK YOU!



National Portrait Gallery
Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer
EXIT

Is this your first visit to this specific building?
○ No ○ Yes

Please rate your overall experience in this exhibition, *Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer*, today:
○ Poor ○ Fair ○ Good ○ Excellent ○ Superior

Which experiences did you find especially satisfying in *Elvis at 21*? [Mark one or more]
○ Being moved by beauty
○ Connecting with emotional experiences of others
○ Enriching my understanding
○ Gaining information
○ Getting a sense of the everyday lives of others
○ Recalling memories
○ Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw
○ Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things

Please rate the following features of this exhibition, *Elvis at 21*:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
Introductory Text	○	○	○	○	○
Information Desk	○	○	○	○	○
Display Layout	○	○	○	○	○
The Photographs	○	○	○	○	○

Did you visit today specifically to see *Elvis at 21*?
○ No ○ Yes

With whom are you visiting? [Mark one or more]
○ I am alone ○ Other adult(s) ○ Youth under 18

Are you male or female?
○ Female ○ Male

What is your age?
☐☐

Do you live in the United States or another country?
○ United States, specify zip code: ☐☐☐☐☐
○ Another country, specify: _____

THANK YOU!

Entrance Survey *Exit Survey*

Survey forms used for a study of visitor responses to the exhibition Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer[1]

and a consequent aversion to risk. Innovation requires failure and usually failure is much more instructive than success. But the path of instituting a system for studying the thinking and experience of visitors is not a risk. There could be unforeseen difficulties, but each of these difficulties will be a valuable learning opportunity.

Assuming that there is willingness to study visitors at a museum and to try new types of programmes or approaches in response to what is learnt, we still need some objective way of identifying which of those new ideas should be continued and which should be revised. How can one determine whether an experiment is successful or not?

Evaluation

Evaluation implies a judgment and it can seem threatening to many practitioners. The word is perhaps unfortunate, because the true aim of evaluation is to gain useful information from an outside perspective. The practitioners know their own thoughts and goals very well. But what do others think? If we are aiming for visitor focused programmes and museums, we must care what the visitors think. But finding that out in a reliable, measurable way is not as simple as it might appear. It is not uncommon for museums to ask visitors to rate their offerings. These are sometimes referred to as 'satisfaction scales'. There is a long tradition of consumer satisfaction scales in market research. The one most frequently applied in museum evaluations is a version of the following: 'How satisfied were you with your visit today?' The response set is a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 10 is 'very satisfied.'

There are a number of problems with using this scale in a museum context. First, 'satisfaction' is the criterion being established by the survey question. It may not be the concept that best suits the visitor perspective. Is 'satisfaction' an adequate term to describe what one seeks from a museum visit? Second, scales like this one work best in situations where there is a substantial range of opinion. When it is applied to museums, responses tend to cluster at the high end of the scale, between 7 and 10. This greatly reduces the sensitivity

of the scale. Visitors who had no complaints, but were not particularly moved by their encounter will give different scores. Some will mark '10' because they don't want to suggest that something was lacking. Others will mark '8' or '9' because they want to reserve '10' for really special experiences. In other words, it becomes difficult to distinguish between those who were minimally satisfied and those who were truly excited by their experience.

For the last eight years at the Smithsonian Institution, we have been using a scale that we call 'Overall Experience Rating'. The question is simple: 'How would you rate your experience in this museum or exhibition or programme'. The response options are Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, and Superior. There are two advantages to this scale. First, it does not suggest any criteria for the rating. The respondents can rate it according to whatever standard they wish, whether it is satisfaction, expectation, excitement, learning, design, aesthetics or any other. Whatever their starting point, they are simply being asked to grade it. Second, the scale distinguishes between 'Excellent', a value without any hint of criticism and 'Superior', a condition beyond, a superlative. This scale is sometimes used in rating musical performances, because a performance can be note perfect (Excellent) without being musically exciting (Superior) and it is important to be able to make the distinction in quality.

In practice we have found that this question can also be used prospectively, by asking visitors about to enter a museum, exhibition or programme: 'How do you think you will rate your experience in this museum, exhibition or programme when you leave?' By comparing entrance and exit ratings we can establish whether visitors on the whole were surprised or disappointed.

On average across all Smithsonian museums roughly half of those leaving the museum will rate their overall experience as Excellent, with about 20% marking Superior and 30% marking Poor, Fair or Good (most of these are 'Good'). Those who mark Excellent tend not have any specific criticisms, but neither were they particularly moved. Those who mark Superior are most pleased with their experience, while those who mark Poor, Fair or Good tend to have some level of criticism. Using a scale like this one can measure precisely the degree to which one's experiments in visitor focused museums and programmes are responding to the needs and interests of visitors.

Back to study

A rating is only a starting point. If it is high, one needs to investigate why that is so. If it is low, one needs to uncover the problem. In either of these two cases the rating points to a learning opportunity. If the rating is average, the experiment is not going to be particularly instructive. Only if one can find in the data some sub-group that stands out with either high or low ratings and then explore the experience of that sub-group, will the rating process achieve its maximum benefit.

Now one starts the cycle again, using qualitative inquiry to better understand what is happening; why and how the visitor's perspective is constructing experience, out of the opportunities that the museum has provided. After that one can proceed to new experiments, test their effectiveness with the overall experience rating and learn something new that can again be used for further programme planning.

WHAT WILL THE NEW MUSEUM BE LIKE?

The method that I am suggesting here is not value neutral. It will tend to produce a certain kind of museum, perhaps one very different from the museums we now have. Underlying the method is an implicit definition of what a museum is and how it works. From this perspective a museum is a carefully constructed environment in which people are able to pursue their own agendas. Based on my experience with museum visitors in America I believe that there are two fundamental aspects to this agenda.

First, museum visitors are seeking confirmation of their identity, beliefs and ways of seeing the world. The museum experience is minimally satisfying when the visitor finds reinforcement of his or her beliefs. But this does not require much effort on the part of the museum. It needs to provide no more than a point of access and recognition. People are naturally inclined to seek confirmation of their thinking. For example, there are some visitors who come to the museum for respite from their lives and the world of everyday work. Such visitors treasure the quiet and serenity they find in the galleries and are disturbed by crowds, loud audio displays, large groups of children and so on. Other people like the excitement of popular exhibitions with throngs of visitors jostling for position. If a museum wishes to serve both of these types, it needs to distinguish between the quiet and the loud places, the rooms where you can think and the rooms where you can be active with others. The choice of a

particular kind of space represents a confirmation of how the individual visitor prefers to be. Second, museum visitors are seeking to expand themselves through positive experiences in a safe and familiar space. These positive experiences include joy, gratitude, inspiration, pride, amusement and awe. The visit is usually driven by a desire for a particular set of experiences, but it will be really special, memorable and 'Superior' when it includes unexpected pleasures and discoveries.

CONCLUSION

How can a museum support these needs? Obviously it needs to provide entry points or access points that are in line with the fundamental orientation of the individual. A visitor needs to feel at least minimally comfortable with the environment. If the museum is intimidating or unfriendly the visitor will not enter.

But beyond that, the museum is an artificial environment in which elements have been deliberately chosen to emphasise their interrelationships. The elements include ideas, stories, people, objects, cultures and sounds, among others. In this sense the museum is like life itself with its constant interweaving of levels and dimensions, but it is more deliberately and consciously arranged so that no matter where an individual enters this maze the possibilities for making connections are maximised.

People come to museums to confirm and extend themselves in ways that are personally meaningful. It is not really our business to say what meanings they should make or how they should make them. However, it is our business to provide as rich and engaging an environment as possible, one that realises the interdependence of all that exists in concrete terms.

The effort to make a museum visitor centred can never be completed. Even as one thinks one understands something about the audience, it changes in some way, because the times change, our understanding changes or the people who come are different as programme offerings shift. The process of creating a visitor focused museum is not unlike studying some fundamental aspect of science. Evidence turns up in interviews and observations. As one makes sense of that evidence a kind of provisional theoretical model or understanding is constructed. Through design research and experimentation that understanding is tested. Its correctness is verified or denied by the overall experience rating measure and that in turn, provides the opportunity to collect more evidence that will require a revision or extension of the understanding.

The cycle repeats endlessly. But each time that we go through the cycle we are making room for more people by taking into account more possibilities as our understanding grows ever more rich and complex. A visitor focused museum leaves out no one and offers those who work in museums an opportunity to continuously learn, grow and serve others.

Note

[1] The report of the study can be accessed at <http://si.edu/opanda/docs/Rpts2011/ElvisAt21_Final.pdf>.

Museum Theatre
Living connections to exhibits

ELIZABETH PICKARD

ABSTRACT

History museums conserve, curate and preserve the past in order to help inform society's present reality. In that pursuit we must place our artefacts and documents within the human context in which they were created. This endeavour requires strong, meaningful stories but also the ability to connect these stories to present day visitors in a compelling way. When museum educators deploy museum theatre in pursuit of these compelling connections, visitors often have stronger emotional and human reactions to the people and situations portrayed than they do when listening to a lecture, reading label copy or gazing at an object.

Theatre breathes life into distant or difficult to understand conflicts and historical situations, literally making the past not only present, but human, in the museum gallery. Theatre is a superlative means of exploring both historical and present conflict with present day visitors, provoking deeper and more thoughtful interaction with museum content.

Case studies and visitor response data from plays performed in the galleries of the Missouri History Museum in the United States demonstrate the effectiveness of museum theatre practice as an interpretive medium.

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INTRODUCTION

'Who are we? The stories we tell ourselves are the stories that define the potentialities of our existence. We are the stories we tell ourselves' (Kapur 2009). The stories we tell ourselves as a society shape our collective identity. Museums traditionally convey societal narratives through objects. To some visitors, well versed in history or art, the power of the object is enough. For them, very little interpretation is needed. However, few of us are experts on every artefact in a museum. Less well known objects and complex ideas require contextualisation and interpretation in order to deepen visitors' understanding. There are many techniques used by museums to provide this story or context: basic identification labels, complex narrative labels, recorded information, audio visual elements or a live guide. When museums wish the issues or events portrayed in an exhibition to be made more personal; emotionally and intellectually engaging, many turn to live performance known as 'museum theatre'.

WHAT IS MUSEUM THEATRE?

Museum theatre practitioners are still working toward a shared language for describing the practice. The Americas branch of the International Museum Theatre Alliance (IMTAL) has as its mission, 'to inspire and support the use of theatre and theatrical technique to cultivate emotional connections, provoke action and add public value to the museum experience.'[1] This definition is purposefully broad because it reflects diversity in the field. For example, museum theatre can include unscripted interactions with interpreters who are in character as historical figures. There are entire museums built around this concept, like Plimoth Plantation, where visitors can interact with people taking on the roles of the first English settlers in New England or Colonial Williamsburg where visitors can interact with anyone from an enslaved African working a plantation to Thomas Jefferson himself. This kind of performance is often referred to as first person interpretation. Science centres on the other hand, often use theatrical techniques to amplify electricity or chemistry demonstrations presented by theatrical characters. Other sites use puppet shows, scripted plays that take place in a museum's auditorium or gallery, participatory pieces where the audience is drawn into the play's action or a combination of these.

Some first person interpreters and guides in museums who enact live demonstrations, shy away from being defined as 'actors' because they feel it emphasises their performance abilities rather than their hard-won subject matter expertise. However, there can be little doubt that most of them are drawing on theatrical techniques like costuming, characters, story and vocal techniques or technical theatre components such as lighting and sound designs.

Although most good actors and playwrights will do research into their roles, museums are seen as authorities on their subject matter. It is therefore especially important that museum theatre programmes are based on solid research and content knowledge in support of an exhibition's narrative goals. Even where museum plays represent disagreements between experts, whether about modern science or historical interpretation, it is important that the difference is accurately represented. Most museum theatre actors are asked questions after they perform and so they must be able to teach as ably as they act.

Museum theatre is very often tied to specific artefacts or portions of a gallery space. In the United States, one of the earliest scripted museum theatre pieces was a puppet show presented next to a moon rock at the Science Museum of Minnesota following the 1969 moon landing (Bridal 2004, p. 15). By contrast, first person interpretation, or living history, came into use in the United States and Europe sometime after World War II (Anderson 1991, p. 3). Since the 1970s, museum theatre has grown in the variety of museum types that use it and in its practice around the world. All of its practitioners engage audiences through live performance and aim to provoke deeper thinking, feeling and interaction with the subject at hand.

These are certainly the goals of the museum theatre programme at the Missouri History Museum (MHM) where short, scripted plays are enacted inside galleries and other spaces. These plays are usually based on primary source documents such as letters, diaries, maps, memoirs and government papers and trustworthy secondary sources such as journal articles and history books. Developed in conjunction with exhibition design teams, the plays are meant to highlight individuals or ideas that lend themselves to theatre and are especially helpful in cases when the exhibitions lack artefacts to display complex ideas or have limited space. Theatre allows for nuances that are difficult to examine in a 150 word label. MHM's theatrical choices are also informed by its mission to 'deepen the understanding of past choices, present circumstances and future possibilities; strengthen the bonds of the community; and facilitate solutions to common problems.'[2]

Museum theatre is one of the most effective tools in the educational arsenal of museums for inspiring the empathy, engagement and interest necessary to trigger discussions.

WHY IT WORKS

Catherine Hughes writes in her doctoral dissertation that, 'it is clear museum theatre has the possibility of adding emotional meaning to the quiet artefacts in glass cases and in dioramas' (Hughes 2008, p. 258). The Centre for Applied Theatre Research in the UK sponsored a study of Performance Learning and Heritage (Jackson & Kidd 2008, p. 134) that found:

- The 'well-told story' has an unparalleled ability to engender interest in and often empathy with, the life experiences of those considered 'other' from ourselves.
- Performance can give voice to and celebrate, the experiences of marginalised individuals or communities excluded from the grander narratives of conventional history.
- Performance can be used to great effect in dealing with challenging and difficult content within heritage environments. It is especially effective in instigating, framing and hosting debate and dialogue and can give people a newfound appreciation of the complexity of the subject matter.

What is more, both studies found that museum visitors tended to recall their theatre experiences in detail and for long periods of time afterward (Hughes 2008, p. iii; Jackson & Kidd 2008, p. 134).

Theatre can also appeal to all ages, education levels and learning styles (Hughes 1998, p. vii). In some ways it is also a last bastion of truly popular theatre. While the ticket to a season of Shakespeare or Moliere might be seen as a luxury for an educated elite, museum theatre pieces often attract audiences of all ages who have never seen a play (Bridal 2004, p. 3). A person who never reads a label can be engaged by a live performance, a reader can be enthralled by seeing written topics brought to life and a child will react and be drawn to a play's spectacle and emotional content as much as her grandparent might. Theatre is simply one of the most engaging methods for enlivening the exhibitions.

MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM

In 2005, MHM conducted a survey of museum theatre programmes in the US and Canada (Pickard 2006), to discover the kinds of theatre programmes that best fit with the museum's size, space, mission and exhibitions. Based on the responses to the survey, a gallery theatre programme was piloted over two weekends in 2006.

'Shaking Up the Status Quo' took advantage of the existing exhibition architecture for a set and used open exhibition area for seating. Source: Missouri History Museum © 2006

The play was about the civil rights movement in the St. Louis area during the 1940's (Bey 2006). In a post-play evaluation, 97% of respondents said they liked seeing theatre in the galleries, 92% said they were inspired to look at the exhibits more closely, 71% said they learned something new while 23% said it reminded them of a time and movement they had lived through or participated in. Many of those people shared their own stories of the civil rights movement with the rest of the audience during brief post performance discussions. One visitor said: 'I feel this was great because one must know about the past in order to move on to the future. Some people are not at all aware especially youth, I prefer to look at live actors than just looking at pictures and reading. Please have more.' Another wrote: 'The play as very moving, it made me want to think about what are the civil rights issues of today. And have we really made much progress?'

In the 25 plays developed and performed since then, MHM has continued to work toward deepening those responses. Museum theatre at MHM has proven to be most effective when it addresses unknown or difficult stories and alternative perspectives.

Go Home Rosie

One of the first productions was 'Go Home Rosie' (Pickard 2007), a play that provides just such an alternative viewpoint to a well known time in the history of the US. The play is set at the end of World War II. This era is generally portrayed as one of the nation's greatest moments. As part of this dominant narrative, the men and women who fought and endured that war are commonly referred to as the 'greatest generation'. Women of this generation were recruited into factory work to cover jobs vacated by men who enlisted in the armed forces. In order to entice women into these jobs the mythical archetype 'Rosie the Riveter' was created. Rosie was a constructed heroine who worked long and arduous hours in heavy manufacturing jobs as her patriotic duty. Several popular images were made of the mythical 'Rosie' portraying her looking resolutely forward, strong yet feminine. She was pert, beautiful and enduringly brave. A hit song was dedicated to her and played over the radio during the war.

Interpretation about the end of World War II usually focuses on the Allied victory over the Axis powers. Visitors do not expect a play set during that time to discuss unfairness or injustice. The play highlights both of these because it asks what happened to the real 'Rosie the Riveters' when the war ended. The character in the play, Eloise, is a composite based on millions of real women who entered the defence industry during the war. Like those real women, she is summarily

Left: This now iconic image was originally commissioned by the United States War Production Commission - Co-coordinating Committee for use on a recruiting poster in 1943. The artist was J Howard Miller. Photo is in the public domain. Right: In 'Go Home Rosie', the actress's clothing intentionally mimics that of the iconic image. Her story, however, is not the dominant or expected one. Source: Missouri History Museum © 2007

dismissed from her job, not because of incompetence or lack of qualifications but simply because she is a woman. Although the reason given for these firings was often that the men were coming back from the war, the truth is that qualified women were told that if they were men they would be kept on. The popular understanding is that these women cheerfully resigned when the war ended to go home and have families. Employers and the government were shocked to discover that many women enjoyed the wages and sense of fulfilment from the work. One wartime survey said that 8 out of 10 women workers intended or wanted to keep working even though the war was over.

The play brings the audience to this alternative viewpoint by introducing Eloise on the day she gets her pay envelope. She talks about women being laid off and how some women are happy, but how others, like the widows and single women, aren't sure what they will do or how they will survive if they lose their jobs. She talks proudly about how hard she works, her promotion to 'lead girl' or head riveter and about how much money she has saved. She delays opening her own pay envelope that may contain the pink slip[3] that she so dreads. Of course, when she finally does open the envelope, the pink slip is there.

The play is short, only 20 minutes and there is only one actor. The play is performed in a section of the museum's 'Seeking St. Louis' exhibition, devoted to industrial work in St. Louis during the 20th century. It contains images and uniforms worn by real Rosies as well as a toolbox belonging to one of them. The exhibition's images and models of aircrafts, toolboxes and blueprints surround the actor while she performs. Most of the trappings of theatre, other than costume, are absent. Yet the audience response is strong. It is not unusual for audiences to cry with Eloise as she suppresses her sadness at being fired and decides to leave the audience with a song.

During the discussion after the play, people often ask how many women lost their jobs, whether they re-entered the workforce and who, if anyone replaced them. In the current economy, it also often draws audience members to talk about their own struggles with unemployment. One man approached the actor after the performance and thanked her, saying, 'My mother was a riveter. She never talked about what she had done during the war and this play helped me know her better.' Increasingly rarely as the generation ages, real Rosies share their stories. On one memorable occasion, one of these women said, 'I forgot all the things I did until you told me about them again.' The play is a means of capturing our recent history and also helping visitors make meaning connected to their own identities, families and histories.

Nobody's Boy

While World War II is a source of national pride, slavery is a source of national shame in the United States. 'Nobody's Boy' (Farmer, Keeton, Muhammad & Pruitt 2007), a play based on a work of historical fiction published by the MHM press, sought to do just that. The play is performed in the other half of the Seeking St. Louis exhibition, which is dedicated to the city's history from 1764-1900. The play travels through the gallery, past portraits of African Americans and a set of slave shackles. It enacts several troubling scenes about slave auctions, one person's quest to buy their freedom and another's to escape to the northern parts of the United States where they could be free.

An actress in 'Nobody's Boy' portrays George's mother just after she purchased their freedom from slavery. The exhibition's courthouse steps and image of Dred Scott can be seen in the background. Source: Missouri History Museum © 2007

Through the play, the museum wished to lay bare the horrific realities of a life enslaved. Children could be and often were sold away from parents. Enslaved people were not free to come and go from their homes. It was illegal to teach them to read or write and anything they earned belonged to their owners.

Responses to the play are varied, but strong. Audience members frequently gasp in sympathy as a young boy's mother in the play begs her owner not to sell him and cheer with him as he realises the reality of his freedom. Such experiences are essential to the museum's mission because without that basic understanding of past choices, the present and certainly the future are harder to chart. There are many who would argue that the wounds of the choice to enslave fellow humans are far

from healed. If museum theatre can begin to expose these scabbed over histories by inspiring empathy with the real people who endured them, it can be a catalyst for healing.

St. Louis I Am

In the most recent piece undertaken in the museum, 'St. Louis I Am' (Pickard et al. 2011) there is some indication that this healing sometimes occurs through the play itself. 'St. Louis I Am' was written as an accompaniment to a large travelling exhibition about African American History at MHM during the summer of 2011. In fact the exhibition is so large, that there was no room to perform inside the gallery and the play instead takes place in the museum's auditorium. This separation required the play to have strong thematic ties to the exhibition, emphasising African Americans' cultural, political and economic contributions.

Projected images from the museum's collection strengthen the link to the museum's content. Many of the stories told in the play can be found either in the travelling exhibition or in the museum's core galleries. Audiences encounter free and enslaved blacks working for freedom; soldiers, businesswomen, teachers, dancers, poets, musicians and political activists. The theme in many of the scenes is perseverance and triumph over adversity. Perhaps most importantly the play begins and ends with the young actors clearly in the present. The play opens with drums, beat boxing and rapping but ends with a shift from the play's opening 'St. Louis I am' to a call to 'Remember these stories because without them, St. Louis is not St. Louis. St. Louis we are.' One of the very first responses to the play came in an early talk back when an African American woman said, 'You have made me prouder to be from St. Louis.' To this woman, St. Louis's history was a cause for shame but the play revealed that much of it is a great source of pride for every person in the city. If these stories are brought into the light and told well then the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves can change and change for the better.

CONCLUSION

Theatre in museums takes interpretation beyond what an object is made of or how old it is, who used it or how it was made. Performances draw on the human need for stories. They fill a role in the museum that has been filled around the world for millennia by living men and women telling us those essential stories of ourselves from the fireside to the digital age. Characters portrayed in museum theatre have the potential to challenge visitors to feel with people who are long dead or very different from themselves by putting museum objects and stories into a present, human context. Museum theatre at its best dares audiences to draw human connections between themselves and the museum subject matter. In the end, watching museum theatre inspires continued thinking, extended memory, deeper and more meaningful interactions with museum content and hopefully, return visitation to our cultural institutions.

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- *Scott v. Sanford*, United States Supreme Court, 60 US 393, 1857.

Notes

1 The International Museum Theatre Alliance, a membership organisation for museum theatre practitioners <www.imtal.org> has an ongoing discussion about definitions here: <www.museumtheatredefinitions.blogspot.com/>.

2 MHM's mission and an overview of its programmes and exhibitions are available at <www.mohistory.org>.

3 Pink slip refers to a dismissal notice.

Access to History
Making design universal

ABHA NEGI

ABSTRACT

It is the fundamental right of the elderly, children and the disabled to partake in their country's heritage, but there are many practical challenges in the process of improving the accessibility of historical monuments. We will draw upon Svayam's role in making world heritage sites in India accessible and at the same time maintain their historicity. The paper will include Svayam's partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India for making accessibility a movement. Accessibility makes for sound business sense too; ever since Qutb Minar has been made accessible, footfall of visitors and revenue have increased considerably. It is important to layout a road map for future with improved access for all, with an understanding of the issues underlining the process. Our message is 'Incredible India, Accessible India'.

Abha Negi, the Director of Svayam, an initiative of SJ Charitable Trust, New Delhi, is trained in 'Non-Handicapping Environment' at Asia Pacific Development Centre on Disability in Thailand. Svayam works to promote accessibility in built infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

Accessibility to the public spaces and built environment is everyone's birth right. Everyone has a right to get out of their homes to make a living, for education, leisure, entertainment or to undertake daily chores in a comfortable atmosphere and with dignity. People with disabilities,

have a right to enjoy, experience and learn from India's valuable heritage and archaeological sites and cultural institutions, like museums. Yet, most of India's cultural sites are barred for people with disabilities. None of these institutions will explicitly say 'You Are Not Welcome' to visitors with disabilities, but because of their continuing refusal to invest in making their physical sites, exhibits and programmes accessible, millions of Indians are kept away from these.

INDIA: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

A conservative estimate is that people with disabilities constitute 5-6% of India's 1.2 billion population and yet they are unseen, unheard and almost invisible in the public arena. The reason for their invisibility is the inaccessible infrastructure, but if we really look closely, this is not all. The numbers will swell when we take into consideration our ageing population, whose advancing years bring along different kinds of disabilities of hearing, seeing and mobility. Elderly people also face barriers in accessing exhibitions and programmes in museum institutions.

Apart from the social stigma that people with disabilities face, the inaccessible infrastructure makes them even more invisible. While public office buildings are slowly introducing ramps and elevators with Braille signs, our museums and heritage sites still lag behind. However, in recent years many proactive actions have been undertaken by various government and non-government agencies, aimed at creating truly inclusive public environment. Accessibility for people with disability was recognised as a right with the passage of *The Disability Act 1995* according to which it became mandatory to provide barrier-free access in all public places and public transportation systems.

This year, the final draft of a new Bill, called the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2011, was submitted to the Ministry of Social Justice. The Bill includes a few landmark clauses to promote human rights, fundamental freedoms, right to political participation. It also recommends setting up of a National Disability Rights Authority.

ACCESSIBILITY IN HISTORIC SITES

The accessibility features at our heritage sites are woefully inadequate. When these monuments were built in a different era, their goal was to mark a war victory, grandeur, royalty and a rich lineage. Lofty structures with multiple levels and flights of stairs were common. Old forts often have difficult entrances and pathways to defend themselves from military assault by an enemy. These inaccessible and isolated buildings were a marker of power and invincibility, to be enjoyed only by the able-bodied.

But today, the rights-based approach, as opposed to charity and patronage based approach, of the disability movement considers it a fundamental right of the elderly, the disabled and children to connect with their rich cultural heritage and roots as well and access these heritage sites, monuments and places of tourist interest, be it in the form of physical access or access to information. Even though cyber access has picked up at a phenomenal pace, it is the physical access that links one to our social, cultural, physical traditions.

The biggest resistance has been to retrofit a historic structure or alter its buildings for fear of tarnishing its beauty and creating eye-sores. The justification that is usually given is the compulsion to keep heritage buildings intact. However, we have many examples of buildings that have been remodelled to make them inclusive, by taking utmost care to ensure that every new addition blends in with the overall look and feel of the site in question.

Another reason for hesitation is the doubt that the disabled and the elderly will step out of their homes to use the changed facilities and if the expenditure being undertaken is worthwhile. Many institutions often show their visitor profile to show that they do not receive visitors with disabilities. But, only if the changes are made will the visitor profile change.

INCLUSIVE MUSEUMS

The goal of making a museum inclusive is a common one. Often, museums understand this as opening the doors to communities of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. But, making the museum barrier-free for people with disabilities is central to this goal. Our museums lack even the basic tools of accessibility. A quick checklist or accessibility audit of our museums is presented below:

- Physical access to enter a barrier-free building.
- Entrance to museum buildings accessible through ramps.
- Elevators kept operable at all times.
- Clear and unobstructed pathways created inside the museum for wheelchair movement.
- Accessible exhibitions and effective communication, designed for public programmes.

- Text labels next to artefacts and explanatory text panels on the walls, written and placed in such a way that they are read by visitors who are either seated on a wheelchair or standing. The text should be of large-print for good readability.
- Captions added with any interactive multimedia exhibits.
- Museum staff trained in addressing and responding to their needs.
- Braille brochures and audio-tours made available at the reception counters.

Often, the museums may find these to be additional expenditure that their resource-starved operations may not allow. But these are not a matter of choice any longer but an imperative.

ACCESS AUDITS

At Svayam[1], we work towards bridging the gap between what is there on ground and what should be there to ensure equitable utilisation of public resources. As all the built public infrastructure is in the domain of the government, we began reaching out to various civic and government bodies involved in development and maintenance of places of public and tourist interest as well as historical monuments. As access consultants, we were invited to undertake audits to identify the gaps and provide strategies as per international standards of accessibility and universal design, and finally to handhold the implementation process to ensure the accurate execution. During this process, we trained engineers and contractors to ensure that the interventions undertaken were as per international standards and specifications and adhered to the principals of universal design as much as possible.

National Museum, New Delhi

In May 2010, we undertook a brief access audit of the National Museum in New Delhi, though it is not implemented yet.

Currently, the main entrance used for the museum has a flight of 13 steps rendering it completely inaccessible. There are handrails on both sides, but these do not provide continuous support all the way up to the top of the stairs. There is an alternate entrance under construction, with signage and guiding blocks to aid access for visually impaired. The ramp is currently used to move goods during special exhibitions, but if there is a visitor on a wheelchair, this alternate ramp-entrance is opened. This can become a tedious task for the visitors using wheelchairs since it is not a regular activity and

Uniform Signage has been provided at National Museum

Provision of Tactile pathways leading to main entrance at National Museum

Alternate entrance at National Museum

involves extra efforts on the part of both the museum management and the visitors. This alternate entrance opens into one of the main corridors of the museum, but because it is not used on a regular basis, the passageway has turned into a storage place for items waiting to be cleared. There is no ticket counter, map or layout provided at the end of the ramp for the disabled visitors. We have suggested that a platform-lift may be installed at the main entrance on either side, which will run along the handrail from the ground level to the 13 step entrance, or a ramp of a gradient of 1:12 can be installed at the main entrance. Alternatively, the current alternate entrance may be made the main entrance for all visitors. The canteen of the museum is in the basement and there is no lift access to it. The toilet doors open inside leaving no space for wheelchair maneuverability. The sinks have no knee space for wheelchairs.

Most of the signages inside the museum are about 240 to 640 millimetres from the floor level, placed at varying height on different locations. These are not readable and have faded at many places. We suggested that the information signage should be in Sans Serif font in upper as lower case rather than just upper case, be readable from a distance of three to four feet and may be placed between 740 to 1200 millimetres, at a uniform height, as a standard practice. We also recommended the introduction of digital signage.

To make the exhibits accessible to the visually impaired, the museum can introduce a few physical models or replicas of important exhibits that can be touched and felt. Brief Braille description and detailed audio description regarding these should be provided through speakers.

Manav Sangrahalay, Bhopal

We undertook a similar brief audit at the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalay in Bhopal in February 2011 and the project execution is now underway.

A museum's website is the first interface for most of the international and many domestic visitors, especially for visitors with disability because they prefer to have information in advance about the places they intend to visit. The current website does not comply with the accessibility standards. While it gives information about the availability of wheelchairs at the museum, the site should also provide an accessible route map, information about accessible toilet and audio guides. There are two entrances to the museum, one is the main entrance and the other on the lake-side. When it comes to visitor services of the museum, the ticket window is not accessible, in terms of the height of the window and the path. The drinking water and toilet facility near the entrance do not have a wheel-able approach.

Ramps without handrails at Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal

Information panels at exhibits displayed in Open Air Museum, Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal

Braille Information panels at exhibits in Open Air Museum, Mahav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal for the benefit of visually impaired visitors

Accessible pathway has been created at Qutb Minar by levelling the surface and removing the gravel for the benefit of visitors with reduced mobility

Interaction with Parliamentary committee

One of the several ramps at Qutb Minar to provide an accessible route that take a visitor to all areas of interest in the monument

We suggest that there should be a tactile map of the site for the aid of visually impaired visitors. The entrance to the souvenir shop is a stepped one and the staircase is not supplemented with handrails to aid elderly visitors.

The museum, however, has many text displays in Braille in the open-air exhibits. It also has an alternate motorable route. We suggested that signs should indicate this as the accessibility route and recommend battery-operated golf-cart type vehicles for guided tours, along with addition of handrails for the steep ramp leading to the amphitheatre. In some of the ramps inside exhibit gallery, standard edge protection needs to be provided to prevent the wheelchair from slipping away from the surface.

Qutb Minar, New Delhi

The access audit conducted at Qutb Minar revealed that due to lack of insight into the diverse needs and lack of technical know-how for interventions like ramps, signage and accessible public conveniences, the majestic Qutb Minar complex was not equipped to receive people with reduced mobility. We observed that even the elderly found it difficult to negotiate high steps and needed assistance in the absence of handrails. Our team of trained access auditors visited the site and made the following observations:

- The concrete ramp at the entrance was steep.
- The temporary ramp at the iron pillar was unstable, without handrails and had a very steep gradient.
- The floor surface of the ramps was slippery.
- The connecting pathway of loose gravel made it difficult to manoeuvre the wheelchair.
- The existing ramps did not conform to international standards.

Before audit-inaccessible ramp at Iron pillar

- There were no handrails provided.
- All the monuments within the complex were not accessible.
- The ticketing complex did not have accessible toilet.
- The ticketing window was too high for a person on wheelchair to access it.
- No accessible parking bay present.

POST AUDIT EXECUTION AT QUTB MINAR

After visiting the site and making observations, we compiled a report of the issues identified and solutions to make Qutb Minar an accessible monument for all including the elderly, children and disabled. On the basis of the report, on site execution was carried out for improved accessibility.

This included addition of a circular accessible route that went around and a total of five ramps deployed at strategic locations that ensured access to all the different areas. The ramps were installed with a gradient of 1:12, to make the tread from one level to another not only comfortable but also accessible for all. All the loose gravel was cleared and continuous level pathways were introduced in the monument for safe walking and easy wheelchair manoeuvrability. An accessible parking bay and an accessible ticketing complex have been introduced in the monument. Tactile guiding blocks were added up to the gate. Other introductions were uniform universal signage, audio guides and an accessible unisex toilet for the older and disabled visitors.

ACCESSIBILITY MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

When the Qutb Minar was made accessible, the fear of inability to recover the additional investment was laid to rest. The user group showed immense enthusiasm and stepped out of their homes to visit this historic monument. The atmosphere was an emotional one since for most of them it was like visiting something they had read only in books.

A study conducted by a newspaper (*Mail Today*, March 3, 2010) showed that ever since the Qutb Minar has been made accessible, footfall of visitors and revenue have increased considerably. For the year 2009, the revenue earned through ticket sales at the Qutb Minar stood at ₹ 104.1 million, much higher as compared to ₹ 55 million collected at the Red Fort and ₹ 48 million at the Humayun's Tomb.

We have undertaken similar audits at the Red Fort and the Taj Mahal and submitted the report for these. The Archaeological Survey of India executed the proposal by installing universally acceptable gradient ramps. But a number of problems persist even today at Taj Mahal, as listed below:

- Staircase leading to main monument is very steep.
- There are no railings.
- The gap between each step is huge.
- There is no accessible vehicle to take a person with disability from the ticket counter to the main gate.
- Even though wheelchairs are available 'free of cost' there is no information on their availability at the ticket counter.
- Persons with disabilities are asked to produce a 'disability certificate' if they request for a wheelchair.

Accessible toilet at ticketing complex

Ramp to Taj Mahal

- Various locals or guides are fleecing people by charging them anything between ₹ 200 and ₹ 400 for a wheelchair.

NEED FOR SENSITISATION

Accessibility is not just about making a monument disabled friendly. It is more about breaking barriers, both physical and mental. Whenever efforts are made to bring about a change in a structure that has existed for several years, there is resistance. The challenge is to bend the bureaucratic mindset and sensitise officials and technicians working at the ground level.

I once asked a contractor who was laying tactile blocks for the blind at The National Museum in New Delhi, why he was laying those yellow bricks on the ground. Pat came the reply: 'These are for decoration'. The interesting part of this exercise was that the tactile blocks were being laid incorrectly with all the warning blocks placed laterally and the guiding blocks found intermittently forming a pattern of sorts. As a result,

Minor level differences addressed at entrance to Taj Mahal

I realised the importance of educating and sensitising those who are carrying out the ground work, so that they know why they are undertaking the exercise.

CONCLUSION

It hasn't been an easy journey. The ongoing war between conservationists and people fighting for equitable access for all is an endless one. While the conservationists argue that any new construction can harm the relic or the historic site, the disability activists question what is the point of having a monument that cannot be equitably accessed by all? The same is true for museums too. In fact, many of our historic monuments house museums inside them. After all, it is the fundamental right of every individual to experience his/her cultural roots.

It would be safe to assume that the issue of 'access' not only empowers disabled people but also enhances the economic capacity of a nation by making all individuals productive and independent.

Acknowledgements

All images are credited to Svayam.

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Notes

[1] An initiative of the S J Charitable Trust, founded by Ms. Sminu Jindal.

Museum in the Mall
Visitors as art consumers

DEEPTI MULGUND

ABSTRACT

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art is a collector-based museum set up in a south Delhi mall in 2011. Hailed as the first of its kind, the museum is a part of a new constellation of institutions and ventures in which the private sector plays a crucial role in creating avenues for the viewing of contemporary art. How have Indian museum goers responded to the didactic mission of the museum? What are the trajectories through which the art museum takes shape in India? What are the differences in the modes of address in the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art vis-a-vis the state run institutions? An attempt has been made to critique the ways in which the museum going experience has been calibrated in India, keeping in focus the publics that do visit the museum. This inquiry can enrich the questions around the role of these institutions in public life and memory.

A 'BETTER CLASS' OF VISITORS?

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is the latest avatar of the art museum in India: the museum in the mall, which needs to be contextualised, tracing the question of this museum's anticipated visitors. Working through these questions might help us develop a critique of the ways in which museums have been studied and analysed and the

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frameworks through which their efficacy is determined. Using the KNMA as a pivot we examine the space inhabited by the KNMA; 'space' as it literally sits in the DLF South Court Mall, as well as the space it occupies within the art-institutional arena and contextualise the issue of audiences for art in India. At the heart of this endeavour is finding what the new private museum can do for the publics of art and how its location might inflect its reception and reading vis-à-vis state run institutions. What happens to the didactic project of museums as spaces of edification when the museum moves to the shopping mall?

WHICH MUSEUM? WHAT ART?

The first museums in India were products of the British scholarly interest in India's past, its peoples, their ways of life, architecture and literature. One register along which this may be read is that the museological modality, with its '…power to define the nature of a past…are the most significant modalities of rulership' (Cohn 1994, p. 10). The Indian Museum at Kolkata was born out of the impulse of the Royal Asiatic Society's members' collections. The Society was formed by William Jones in 1784 in Kolkata and the Museum was established in 1814. This kind of museum thus accumulated a collection which included natural history, ethnography, manuscripts, numismatics and a steady stream of archaeological finds as well, after the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1861. To these collections meant for and assembled by the Orientalist scholar, came a crowd of uninformed visitors: the noisy natives.

What constituted the category of Indian 'art' within these early museums? While influential officials such as Sir George Birdwood and T Holbein Hendley commented exhaustively on the tradition of India's 'crafts,' or 'industrial arts', Birdwood's proclamation that 'India has no fine-arts' (Thakurta 2004, p. 163) meant that the category of art was sidestepped in order to make way for 'artefacts' or 'antiquities' in these early museums. The industrial arts found a space within the museums of economic products that can be roughly understood as by-products of the Great Exhibition of the Arts and Manufactures of All Nations at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851.

Commonly known as the Crystal Palace Exhibition or the Great Exhibition of 1851, it spawned a number of similar exhibitions throughout Europe and America and distant echoes were also found in the colonies, such as the Calcutta Exhibition of 1883. The proliferation of these exhibitions meant that a steady supply of various categories of objects, primarily of economic interest, such as natural products, industrial arts and other raw materials, made their way to the metropole. Thus, museums such as the Bhau Daji Lad Museum of Mumbai (formerly the Victoria and Albert Museum) became assembling depots that served as collection and dispatch depots for these exhibitions and facilitated further economic transactions around these objects (Singh 2009, p. 45).

The colonial period survey museums or economic museums were one of the first secular, public spaces of the time, potentially open to all classes and castes of society. Visitors came to it attracted by their grand buildings and environs that '…held out the promise of pleasure and diversion rather than industry and education' (Singh 2009, p. 52). From the perspective of the colonial museum officials, the entry of these masses, which came to seek entertainment in the dignified interiors of the colonial museum, the didactic mission of the museum seemed to be frustrated by the pleasure that this crowd took in recognising what it already knew and the amusement that the people sought and found.

Sample this from a statement by Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Madras Museum from 1885-1910 (Prakash 2004, p. 214):

> For the great mass of visitors to the museum in India, who come under the heading of sight-seers, and who regard the museum as a tamasha house, it matters but little what exhibits are displayed and how they are displayed, provided only that they are attractive. I am myself amused by seeing visitors to the Madras Museum pass hurriedly and silently through arranged galleries and linger long over a heterogeneous collection of native figures, toys, painted models of fruit, etc.

Quoting Jean PhilippeVogel[1], not only did the museums appeal '... chiefly to the Indian sense of wonder and credulity' but this class of visitors which took pleasure in gawking and treating the museum as an *ajaib-ghar* (house of wonder), also kept the better strata of visitors away (Shivadas 2004, p. 402). Thus, amusements offered by the colonial museums in the form of bands playing on its grounds were seen to appease this crowd that came to the museum, even as policy-makers awaited the entry of the visitor who would come seeking the edification through the museum's collections on display and its larger didactic apparatus. It is this 'better class' of visitor that has been long-awaited by the museum in India even as visitor-figures

of the museums of Presidency towns were often the highest in the world (Singh 2009, p. 52).

Simultaneously, the colonial art-education policy was interested in engaging the artisan to effect a 'revival' of the perceived decline in the quality of the industrial arts because of the competition they faced in a market flooded by British factory made goods. However, the art school found its students mostly from middle classes. These artists cast themselves in the mould of the salon artist and their aspirations were more in line with European artists or an Indian artist such as Raja Ravi Varma.

THE NATIONAL AND THE MODERN

As one moves into the post-Independence period, what happens to the idea of the public within these art institutions? It has been asserted (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1999, p. 406) that:

> … the vast body of literature that is about art in relation to the museums… is not very relevant to the Indian situation because except for a small minority in India and for a very short period of its history, and in very few museums there, art in the current western sense is not a meaningful category. Art continues to struggle to find a (bourgeois) landscape it can be comfortable in.

Art museums, or more broadly, publics for fine art in India thus suffer from an overwhelming dearth of empirical studies and formulations that might explain the role of fine arts in the larger cultural imaginary in the post-Independence period. The relation to the category of 'art' to a broader cultural field and its intersections with the issues of modernity are still issues that need to be unpacked, rather than being written off as irrelevant. In the post- Independence period, we find that categories such as 'modern' or even 'art' segue into the framework of the 'national'. Kavita Singh (2003), in interrogating the National Museum's art historical narratives speaks of the exhibition, 'The Arts of India and Pakistan' held three months after India's independence as being instrumental in forming the core of the National Museum's collection. This exhibition marked the transition of pre-modern Indian objects from being 'artefacts' or 'antiquities' to 'art' (Singh 2003, p. 192). Thus, the National Museum's narrative becomes crucial in its articulation of an 'ancient heritage' accessible to the people of the nation. The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), on the other hand, was driven by the Nehruvian impulse towards internationalism. In 1954 it was considered ahead of its time in its articulation of a 'national modern' (Singh 2010, p. 28). Both these institutions could be read as articulations of modernity by the young nation and for its publics, a call to participate in its narratives, an affirmation of national identity. Thus, these histories of art institutions and the publics in these institutions are even more relevant today, given the scenario of a global art market and rapid cross-cultural flows.

LOCATING THE KNMA

The KNMA draws on the collection of its founder, Kiran Nadar who had been collecting artworks of the Indian modernist idiom as well as contemporary artists for the past 25 years. Initially, the Museum opened within the Special Economic Zone[2] in NOIDA at the Hindustan Computers Limited (HCL) City Campus in 2010 with a curated exhibition, 'Time Unfolded'. In 2011, coinciding with the India Art Summit, this Museum opened up a second space in the District Centre of Saket. The Museum stands at one end of the DLF South Court Mall's central corridor on the ground floor. At present, the retail spaces within which the Mall are yet to open. However, fluttering banners give one an idea of the spaces that will soon be occupied by high end jewellery brands, watch retailers, designer wear and airline offices. The District Centre Saket is home to shopping malls built by real estate giants such as DLF and MGF offering exclusivity, luxury. It sits opposite the Khirki village and is close to the Hauz Rani settlement. The Khirki village, with its pot-holed, narrow by-lanes is incidentally home to the artist based collective Khoj Artists' Studios. The two sides of the road offer a study in contrast, sights that have become increasingly common in our cities as ancient settlements sit next to and often make way for structures marked by global money flows.

Within a larger scenario of art institutions, the KNMA occupies a unique space. Not only is it the first collector based museum for modern and contemporary art, it is also the first museum in India in the mall. Another collector based venture is the Devi Art Foundation that opened in 2008 and works with the format of rotating exhibitions, inviting guest curators to make selections from the collection of the subcontinent's art from the collection of Lekha and Anupam Poddar. The Kolkata Museum of Modern Art, on the other hand, is perhaps the most ambitious of the enterprises; it is a ` 4.10 billion project in which the Committee headed by Rakhi Sarkar of the Centre of International Modern Art (CIMA) Gallery of Kolkata will be in partnership with the West Bengal Government, with galleries

A visitor at the KNMA studies a work by M F Hussain at the Saket space. Source: KNMA, New Delhi

devoted to works from the 1800 AD onwards up to the contemporary.

The KNMA can be seen as aligning itself with two different but complementary trajectories. The first one is of the private sector: galleries and collectors or artist-run collectives, responding to the contemporary not just in the form of patronage but also by creating avenues for a discourse around contemporary art. This private sector led by a number of actors with a significant stake in aligning itself profitably with the global interest in contemporary art has also been able to propel the careers of artists from India into global prominence. Other initiatives include Khoj or gallery backed non-profit foundations like the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA) or collector based foundations like the Devi Art Foundation mentioned above. The second constellation within which the KNMA find a home is that of individuals creating their own institutions, a model that has been followed to a large extent in the American fashion of wealthy collectors establishing spaces for viewing their collection.

HOW VISITORS ENGAGE WITH MUSEUMS

Any discourse on the state of Indian museums points to the pathetic conditions of the museums[3], most often commenting on their shoddy display or their inefficient management. It is assumed that consequently these museums do not draw the kind of visitors that they

ought to draw. The lament, though entirely justified, ignores a crucial dimension of the question: what about those who do come in spite of the various problems that plague Indian museums? So focused has been the attention on the lacunae of the museums in India, that significant aspects of what the museum going experience means to the vast numbers of visitors who do come to the museum has been eclipsed. In the case of National Museum that would mean 51,760 Indian visitors and 25,323 non-Indian visitors who had visited the museum in 2010 (Ministry of Culture).

In her study of the Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalay (CSMVS) formerly the Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai, Savia Viegas (2001) interviewed rural visitors who had come to Mumbai to pay their respects to the Dalit leader at the Dr. B R Ambedkar memorial site on the occasion of Ambedkar's death anniversary. The visit to the museum was a part of their ritual as much as the ritual of ticketless travel; '… usually the compartments in which they travel become a scene of boisterous militancy. None of those traits are displayed at the museum, even though almost every one of them visits the museum.' Further, the Dalit visitors concentrated on viewing the gods in the Buddhist gallery, but would hurriedly run through the adjacent Brahmanical gallery (Viegas 2001, p. 19).

A study such as this one helps point to the chasm that exists between our frameworks of analysis of the museum, usually based on its collections and their display and how they are viewed within the larger cultural sphere. Clearly, there is a relationship that visitors have with the collections and the larger discourse of the museum which is a relationship beyond wide-eyed wonder or incomprehension but one which indicates an active agency. Creating not just their own curatorial schemes (Viegas 2001) but also determining to what use the museum might be put to, such as the use of its grounds for picnics, this body of visitors who come to survey a museum such as the CSMVS are likely to have a different set of responses to modernist works of art. In fact, could we assume an overlap in the audience that can create its own curatorial schemas with regards to pre-modern material and the one that looks at the various phases of Indian modernism? Pre-modern art, while offering a connect to one's 'heritage' is a framework that seems more accessible as compared than modern art which urges individual responses to the works of individuated artists. However, these will remain matters of conjecture in the absence of empirical studies on how art institutions are configured within the larger social sphere.

LOOKING AT THE KNMA

The fact that NGMA's Acquisition Committee has met just once since 2003 (Singh 2010, p. 31), should give us an idea about the representation one might find of work in the period after the 1990's, a period of great changes and explosion in the variety of media that were employed by artists. However, this period also opened up the Indian market to the global art market, pushing the prices of artworks completely beyond the reach of state run institutions. In 2009, the NGMA added a new wing. In the making for about two decades it finally opened with the exhibition, 'In the Seeds of Time' a historical unfolding of India's tryst with modernism, but the elisions of the contemporary moment mean that private sector initiatives will be the ones through which the histories of the period must be charted.

Who do these new formations address themselves to? Or, to put it differently, who are these likely to attract and what will be the points of contact or engagement? For instance, with regards to contemporary art, the crucial question is, whether the discussion will ever be seen in a context other than that of money; be it the memory of astronomical prices that Indian artworks fetch at auctions or the now widely accepted idea of art as investment, as popularised by art funds. The number of people walking into either the KNMA or the NGMA can hardly be measures of their efficacy. Such parameters do not allow for understanding the role of these institutions within public life. Studies that focus on the histories of cultural institutions must find ways of calibrating the museum going experience differently.

The Saket space of the KNMA has been described by its founder, Kiran Nadar, as the more public of its spaces, meant for the 'uninitiated' audiences. In fact, Nadar explains the space as one accessible to a family coming in to watch a movie or to catch dinner at Pizza Hut (Zaman 2011). This visitor might just be the better class of visitors that museum officials of the colonial period had hoped for, a class of visitors whose spaces of consumption and leisure are the mall within which the KNMA situates itself.

The director of KNMA, Roobina Karode[4], speaks of their interest in '...exploring the interlinkages (similarities and differences) with the display contexts that a museum and a mall produces...' the entire field of the mall, with its announcements of luxury watches, jewellery or airline offices, firmly situates the museum, literally and metaphorically at the end of the spectrum of lifestyle products- viz desirable objects

par-excellence, the entire complex of these malls has been premised on exclusivity offered by the high-end market of global brands. Perhaps, in repetition of art's oldest conceits, the fact that the museum does not offer artworks for sale, seals the prestige and desirability of the artworks while affirming the collector's good 'taste.' The small format of the museum makes it an educative experience without causing an information overload or visual fatigue. The average length of the visits varies from 20 minutes to an hour.[5] For the 'uninitiated' audiences (Zaman 2011) there is plenty to take home. The works on display which were seen by this author included a mix of works by the artists of the earlier modernist period to contemporary artists who work with a variety of mediums including mixed media installations and video works, giving us an idea of the wide ranging tastes of the collector. While the curation is competent and the display impeccable, there is a sense of 'showcasing' masterpieces that speak of the collector's taste rather than a spirit of critical enquiry.

One enters after signing the entry register, which is mandatory and is enforced by the guards present and after passing the 'Museum Shop', a collaboration with Vadehra Art Gallery and a small seating area. A film on the industrialist Shiv Nadar and his Foundation's philanthropic projects plays on a screen just above the reception desk. This formality of entry is a huge contrast from the experience of simply buying a ticket to museums in India, a relatively anonymous procedure. One is instantly marked by one's ability to carry out this seemingly simple function of signing one's name, offering a physical address or location.

SUBJECTIVITIES AND THE MUSEUM

If in the art museum, visitors came to participate in the formation of subjectivity (Preziosi 2003), here one enters as a potential consumer, even if not an actual one. To be fair to Nadar's efforts, today malls are navigated by a variety of groups, selecting what they want from the mall space. Once the mall opens, the number of footfalls is only bound to go up. But the fear of reprisal if one does not agree to participate in the codes of consumer behaviour always looms large in such a space. Thus, as interesting as the premise of playing with the interlinkages between the mall and the museum may be, the primary outcome is that the mall as a space restricted to only certain kinds of publics, circumscribes who the museum is accessible to. It is surely interesting to probe the questions of '…exploring what possibilities emerge when the two different economic systems (viz. the mall and the museum) operating on different logics of capitalism are brought together'[6]. Malls, no matter how great their footfalls and their semblance to the new 'public-spaces', address us in a very specific manner: as consumers and the possibilities offered by the museum get eclipsed for those who might find themselves unable to or unwilling to define themselves as consumers, whether potential or actual consumers. This is a very different form of address from one encountered in the state run museums.

In short, even though the framework of citizenship is a limiting one, circumscribed as it is within the national context, to enter state-run institutions is to allow for a greater number of subjectivities to remain in play and are guaranteed by law. This form of address needs to be read within a larger set of discourses; as the nation-state weakens in the face of transnational corporations, the lines between consumers and citizens are blurring to the point where governments, through neo-liberal economic policies are increasingly viewing themselves as serving consumers rather than citizens.

Nadar successfully lobbied with the government to waive off the import duty on the work 'Saurashtra' by S H Raza for which she paid £ 2.3 million at an auction on the plea that it was going to be made accessible to the public *(The Telegraph*, July 16, 2011). As has been stressed earlier in this essay, the notion of who this 'public' is and what this notion might potentially exclude is a question of great significance and instead of taking an easy escape through the ambiguity of this term it is one that needs to be subjected to critical scrutiny. Even as we engage with new constellations, it is important to take note of what Hardt and Negri (2009, p. 4) call the '…constant pressure of profit and property' and its effects on the publics for art. Thus, while we may celebrate the opening up of new platforms for contemporary art, we need to keep track of the narratives of exclusion so as to better inform our ideas about the role of public institutions.

The KNMA has requested the government to look for land for establishing a museum and will eventually be moving to such a space[7]. The forms of address will surely be different then.

CONCLUSION

The museum in the mall presents fresh possibilities for visitor engagement, as the wanderers of the mall and the users of its air-conditioned, plush spaces might stroll in. Yet, it is necessary to probe what is

being processed in these spaces. Can museums become spaces that are able to negotiate wonder? Can these be inclusive while providing an enriching experience for a variety of visitors?

A number of new art ventures and venues that have become possible with new global economic flows open up possibilities; it is important to also take note of who exactly is in a position to take advantage of these new possibilities and what we might do to expand its ambit, instead of taking refuge in numbers and footfalls or easy formulations about the popularity of malls in the present day scenario.

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Notes

1 Jean Philippe Vogel (1872-1958) travelled throughout India between 1899 and 1914 and held an appointment as the superintendent of the so-called Northern Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India.

2 A Special Economic Zone is a special trade zone set-up by governments where, in an effort to invite Foreign Direct Investment, these zones are exempt from a number of laws including suspension of a number of labour laws and include a number of tax benefits and other standard operating procedures.

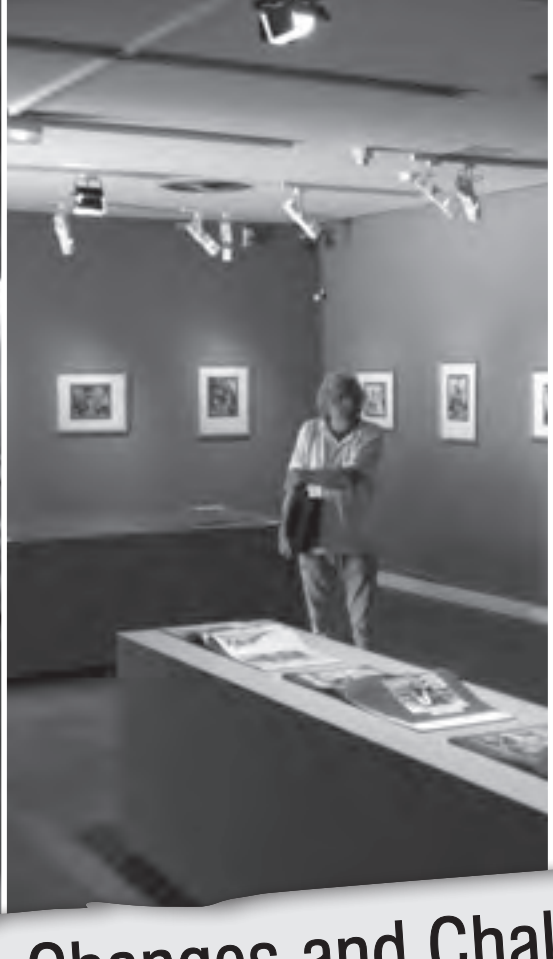
3 This has been a continual critique of museums in India, right from the time of Markham and Hargreaves' influential report in 1936 to Pramod Kumar's comments in the recent issue of Time Out Delhi.

4 As exprsessed by Ms. Roobina Karode, Director, KNMA, in an interview conducted by Deepti Mulgund on September 23, 2011.

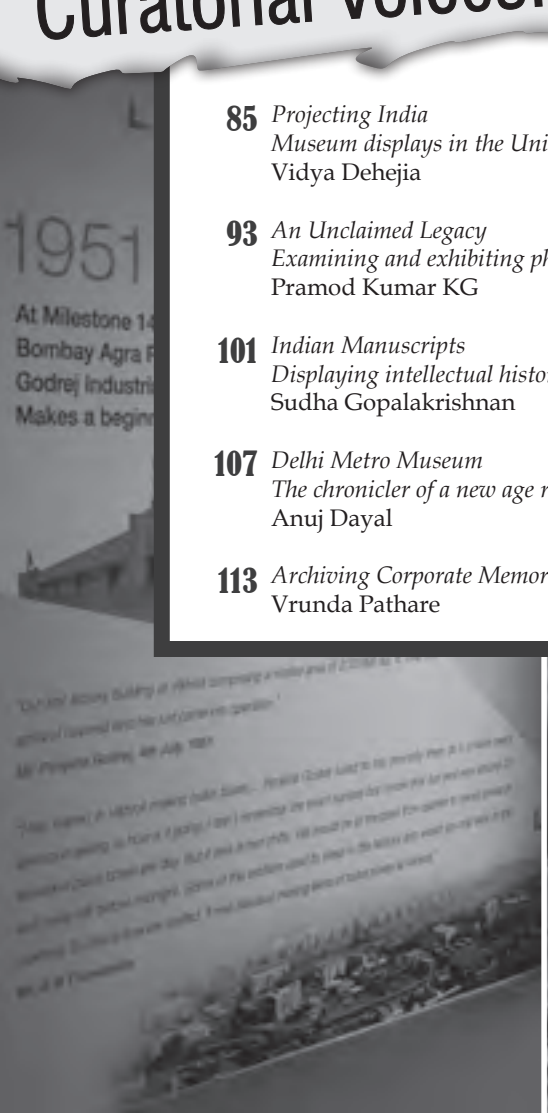
5 *ibid.*

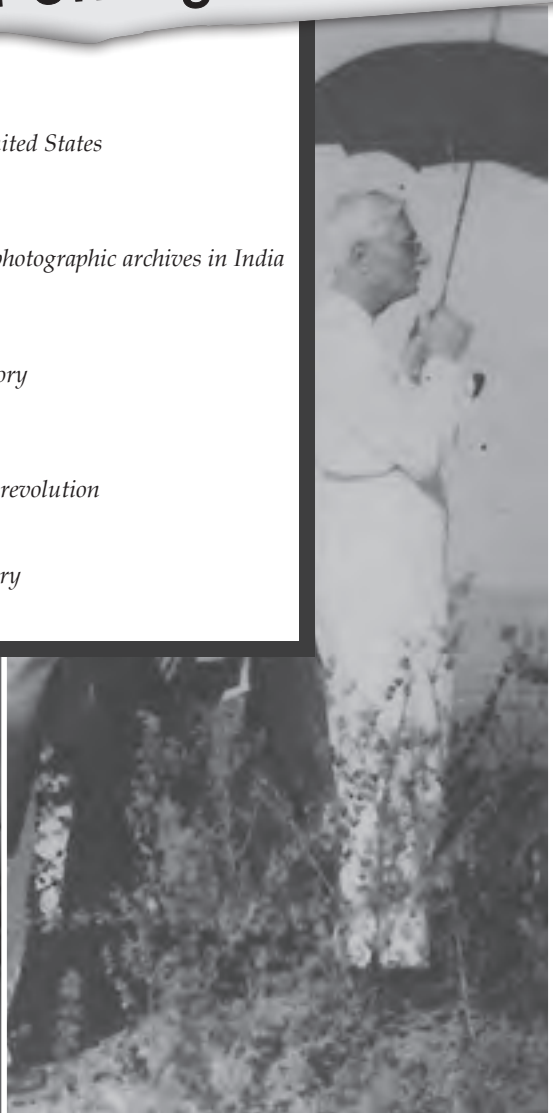
6 *ibid.*

7 *ibid.*



Curatorial Voices: Changes and Challenges





Projecting India
Museum displays in the United States

VIDYA DEHEJIA

ABSTRACT

Museums are instruments of power and the act of choosing and displaying objects become enterprises that are culturally, ideologically and politically weighted. Twenty years ago in the United States, museum professionals in non-Western fields were largely white Americans. Today, several museums have young curators of Indian art who are of Indian background. This change brings in a new set of curatorial perspectives. The exhibitions that will be the focus of my reflections are inevitably charged, to a lesser or greater degree, with the politics of my own identity as an inside-outsider, an individual of hyphenated status. What is the construction of India produced through these exhibitions and museum spaces?

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INTRODUCTION

Why should the reader of 'Context' be interested in the strategies of exhibiting India's art in museums in the United States? Because of what is at stake: the manner in which Indian identity is represented, both directly through the images on display and indirectly through the many nuances and implications of the chosen objects. Far from being neutral entities, museums and their exhibitions are recognised today as

instruments of power that project value judgments about a cultural complex. The very act of choosing and displaying objects is a weighted decision and in making their choices, museums become enterprises that are culturally, ideologically and politically weighted.

With the exception of miniature paintings and modern or contemporary works, most collections of Indian art in museums or private hands, consist of objects whose primary aim was not to arouse admiration of their aesthetic qualities. Stone and terracotta sculptures had specific roles in completing the iconographic programmes of temples; bronze images fulfilled explicit ritual functions. It is true that museum displays isolate and transfer objects from their original settings and in doing so, invest them with new meanings as works of art. While Susan Vogel (1991) speaks of the resulting 'drastic recontextualisation', this is not a troubling phenomenon even though most South Asian sculpture is sacred imagery that was created to be approached with devotion. It is interesting rather to consider Philip Fisher's (1996) comment on art objects surviving recontextualisation 'in the way that certain personalities survive and even thrive under the strain to personality that immigration imposes'.

How exactly is Indian identity conveyed through exhibiting these works of art? It is not the unknown creator of the ancient art object who enunciates that identity; rather, it is the exhibition makers, the curators, who have taken on this vastly important role (Karp 1991). The curatorial voice is one that wields immense power in its ability to control the manner of representing a community. When an exhibition takes cultural interpretation as its mandate, as in 'Manifestations of Shiva' (1981), 'The Peaceful Liberators: Jain Art from India' (1995) or 'Devi: The Great Goddess' (1999), the curatorial voice, with its inevitable cultural assumptions and role in constructing identity, becomes paramount.

CURATING FOR THE 'OTHER'

Twenty years ago in the United States, museum professionals in non-western fields were largely white Americans. Today that scenario has changed somewhat, with young curators of Indian art in several museums being of Indian background. This change brings with it a new set of curatorial perspectives; an initially cautious, though generally positive reaction from museum management and wide ranging feedback from differing categories of the public. Writing in 1991, scholar Svetlana Alpers found it troubling that objects of 'other' cultures are made into something for Western audiences to look at. Today, those who make an Indian object into something to be admired are increasingly themselves of Indian origin and with the vastly increased size of the Indian diaspora, an increasing number of those who look at such objects will, I hope, also belong to that 'other' culture. The exhibitions that will be the focus of my reflections here are inevitably charged, to a lesser or greater degree, with the politics of my own identity as an inside-outsider, an individual of hyphenated status and Indian-American.

Who constitutes the audience for these exhibitions? In the United States, museums rank among the top three family vacation destinations and one in every 480 American adults is a museum volunteer. I should clarify that the term museum is used to cover a range of exhibits from art, history, science, military and maritime issues, to flora and fauna by way of zoos, aquariums and botanical gardens that also rank as museums. Recent statistics revealed as many as 2.3 million visits daily to some 17,500 museums in the US (American Association of Museums 2011). Art museums constitute a more rarefied world but even so, around 650 institutions fall into this category; our focus in this essay will be on exhibiting India's art at such institutions.

The audience is American and in this day and age, increasingly multi-cultural; the Indian diaspora, however, generally has to be coaxed into the museum, often through music or dance performances that might accompany a special exhibition.

Museologists in the US place considerable weight on a museum's educational role and the need to communicate effectively with its audiences. Acknowledging that museums must compete with a variety of leisure-time activities including sporting events, concerts, plays, movies, shopping and even eating out, museum staff seek ever new ways to attract visitors. The focus on viewership reached new heights in 2010 when several museums hired 'stealth observers' to stand unobserved in their galleries watching visitors. They were to report back on the time visitors spent in each gallery, how long they stopped to read a label and galleries in which visitors rarely lingered.

One museum learned that its gallery of 18th century dishes and household goods was so totally bypassed that 'you could fire a cannon through it' (*Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 2010). Deciding on a new strategy, the curatorial staff rearranged the standard display, so

Entrance to 'Devi: The Great Goddess', featuring Anish Kapoor's 1987 fibreglass sculpture titled 'At the Hub' at Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 1999

that its objects tell a-day-in-the-life story of a European aristocrat. At dinner time, a video is projected onto a beautifully laid table to show a reenactment of an elaborate feast. Today, the gallery has become one of the museum's most popular destinations, with visitors stopping at the front desk to get directions to visit it!

The realisation that museums have to compete for viewership with various forms of entertainment induced America to coin the word 'edutainment'. Happily, the clumsy word is rarely used, although the message behind its coining is central to all museums. Three very different exhibitions of India's art that I curated between 1999 and 2008, will be used to illustrate some of these comments on museum practices and priorities.

DEVI: THE GREAT GODDESS

To feature the overwhelming importance of Devi in the artistic and cultural heritage of South Asia, a 1999 exhibition, 'Devi: The Great Goddess' brought together 120 objects from 37 different collections, public and private. It featured a wide range of works from different time periods and included imagery in a range of materials from terracotta, wood, metal and stone to paper, fabric and canvas. The introductory piece was a 1987 fibreglass sculpture by British artist Anish Kapoor, chosen to portray the culture as a dynamic, living entity, rather than a static one of past glory. While the exhibition focused on classical sculptures of high monetary value, it included 'tribal' brasses from interior India and inexpensive 'calendar art' images. Possibilities of presentation were numerous.

My curatorial decision was to propose a new set of categories, organised on the basis of Devi's 'function', which seemed intriguing and evocative and would hopefully create a meaningful experience for visitors. This classification started with the most powerful, most expressive forms of the goddess and moved towards gentler and less dominant categories. Commencing with Devi as Cosmic Force, the exhibition moved to her role as *dayini* or giver of boons, her presence as the 'heroine' in the form of Sita and 'beloved' in the form of Radha, her role as 'local protector' in the form of village and tribal deities, the category of 'semi-divine and auspicious' and concluded with deified 'woman saints'. It was acknowledged that categories of this type overlap and intersect and that all boundaries are fluid; the inclusion of the final two categories in an exhibition titled 'Devi', would be provocative and probably controversial.

The ability of art objects to arouse wonder, in appropriate museum settings, is something that museologists capitalise on, frequently using theatrical tactics in presenting exhibitions. 'Boutique lighting' (Greenblatt 1991) and walls painted in deep colours made the images of Devi glow and sparkle. It seemed a wholly appropriate way to suggest indirectly to viewers that they might view the multiplicity of divine images as multiple sparkling facets of a single diamond, as many Hindus themselves do.

All exhibitions create a structured path and impose new meanings through the way in which objects are juxtaposed in relationship to one another (Duncan 1991). There is usually only one way to enter an exhibition and one way to leave and specific meanings are constructed by placing images early or late in an exhibit or standing in splendid isolation rather than forming part of a cluster. As Fisher (1996) so aptly phrases it, 'The path, the wall with its juxtapositions, the room with its cluster, are all tiny narratives or histories, built into the architecture and into the experiential unit of the visit'. In any exhibition, the material is filtered through the interests and research experience of the curator and in the case of Devi, the experience was indeed structured by my distinctive curatorial interests, sensibilities and biases. A Devi exhibition by another curator would certainly have a different structure.

It is more or less a museum dictum that a successful exhibition is one that restricts itself to conveying two major ideas; more than that cannot be absorbed in a single museum visit. And for an exhibition as complex as Devi, with its vast chronological span and geographical reach from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka, this was certainly important. Apart from conveying the amazing power and importance of Devi through the sheer beauty of the images, the first major concept was to suggest to viewers the paradoxical nature of the Goddess. She is Ma, the mother, that most approachable of beings, gentle, nurturing and concerned with her children's every need. At the same time she is Jaganmata, mother of the universe, an awesome being of great power, remote, fearsome and difficult to approach. The second thought to be imparted to the more serious visitor was posed in the form of a question: 'Is Devi One? Is she many? Is she One through, and in, the many?' This question

Detail of bronze images of Rama and Sita, from 'The Sacred and the Sensuous: Chola Bronzes from South India' at Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 2002

Dressed and adorned image of Shiva Nataraja, from 'The Sacred and the Sensuous: Chola Bronzes from South India' at Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 2002

resonated throughout the exhibition, but no answer was proposed, as any answer, especially within the context of an exhibition experience, would indeed be an oversimplification. It was a sobering curatorial reflection to recognise that the exhibition ultimately bore the awesome responsibility of being representative of an entire culture through its portrayal of a major facet of that culture.

The audience for exhibitions like Devi is largely educated Americans who are impressed by the visual riches of this 'other' culture and interested in learning more about it, provided such learning is presented in an enticing manner. With the information technology facilities at our disposal in the 21st century, museum learning needs to be more than just compelling, it needs to have as much of an interactive component as possible. For Devi, we created an innovative audio-guide with two segments, one that allowed exploration of a range of poems on the goddess and a second, largely for children, that was narrated in the dynamic voice of Devi herself. Viewer responses indicated that the children's segment was by far the more popular.

Part of the regular programming included a children's afternoon that commenced with story-telling, followed by a gallery visit during which the six to ten year olds were asked to select an image of Devi (from a chosen few), on which they would like to write a story. Innovative responses, revealing the children's ability to get deeply involved in unfamiliar material, included several who chose to write about Durga battling the buffalo-demon, but from the angle of the defeated animal. A web presence and an extensive series of public programmes that included performances of dance, music, film and sacred chants, further enriched the experience of the exhibition. Finally, in addition to an attractive, free brochure, the exhibition was accompanied by a substantive stand-alone 'catalogue' that featured a series of essays on Devi from the varied perspective of scholars in religious studies, literature, anthropology and art history (Dehejia 1999).

Would the exhibition have been presented differently if held in India? Probably yes. For instance, labels might have included quotations in Sanskrit and other languages, from a range of major poetic works on Devi.

THE SACRED AND THE SENSUOUS: CHOLA BRONZES FROM SOUTH INDIA

This 2002-2003 travelling exhibition presented viewers with the paradox of the 'sensuous-sacred image' and focused on some of the most aesthetically satisfying imagery created anywhere in the world; bronze images of the 9th to13th century Chola period, from south India (Dehejia 2002). As always, the challenge was to present material that would make a scholarly contribution to the field of South Asian art and culture and was yet what one might term 'user-friendly'. The exhibition invited viewers to ponder the fact that, for both artist and devotee, beauty of external form went hand in hand with inner spiritual beauty. American visitors found this a puzzling, even troubling issue; by contrast, members of the Indian diaspora took it in their stride and engaged in animated debate on the subject.

In the welcoming but contrived environment of a museum exhibition, sacred bronzes of the Chola period were presented as works of art. Visitors could study these up close and admire their sensuous form and swaying movement, technical virtuosity and refined details. But it was necessary to emphasise that viewing these in their original temple context, when they would be covered with silks, jewellery of gold and precious stones and fragrant flower garlands, would be an utterly different experience. Context was vital to demonstrate that for priests and devotees today, as much as in Chola times, the bronze had no existence as a work of art; it existed solely as an object of adoration. So, a large bronze of dancing Shiva was draped and adorned by the local temple priest and placed in a simulated sacred context to alert viewers that the bronzes were sacred processional images carried through town and temple for the many ritual festivities of the south Indian

Tea Service, silver, Peter Orr & Sons, Madras, 1876, from 'Delight in Design: Indian Silver for the Raj' at Miriam & Ira Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2008

Wine ewer, Oomersee Mawji & Sons, Kutch, 1890, from 'Delight in Design: Indian Silver for the Raj' at Miriam & Ira Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2008

religious and social milieu. Photo-murals of adorned images in context, as well as actual jewellery of a type that would have adorned temple bronzes, encouraged viewers to envisage the bronzes in their ritual context. Classical Carnatic music in the galleries alerted viewers to the fact that music is an integral part of the southern temple milieu. The exhibition emphasised the continuity of the creation of bronze images and their ritual significance, into the 21st century.

'Voice' is indeed a crucial issue in museum presentations (Lavine 1991) and the Chola exhibition attempted to present multiple voices of the curator and the diaspora, of story-tellers and ancient poet-saints, in an attempt to provide a richer overall dimension. The Museum's education department participated in two major ways in this exhibition. First, they interviewed practicing Hindus from the greater Washington area and featured their voices in a series of wall text panels placed throughout the exhibition. Their interventions were varied; some provided personal and devotional approaches to individual bronzes, others spoke of

specific temples in which one or other form of deity was enshrined, yet others expressed perplexity at seeing sacred images in a museum and questioned its appropriateness. Here, one might say, was an experiment in how 'the *audience*, a passive entity, becomes the *community*, an active agent' (Karp 1992). Secondly, the education department identified a group of teens of South Asian background and trained them to be 'exhibition guides' for those members of the diaspora, who would not normally visit the museum, but might come if taken around by one of their own. The Tamil script was much in evidence. For instance, it was used to write out titles as well as a popular hymn of the *nayanmar* (saint) Appar, together with an English translation.

Audience response to both Devi and Chola was extremely positive and highly appreciative reviews led to the Royal Academy in London hosting a new Chola exhibition, with its own catalogue. Its director's welcome speech commenced with an acknowledgement that this was the Royal Academy's first Indian exhibition since the country's independence!

DELIGHT IN DESIGN: INDIAN SILVER FOR THE RAJ

A third exhibition, belonging to the Raj or period of direct British rule of India (1858-1947), focused on exuberantly decorated silverware created by Indian craftspeople to cater to British taste and usage (Dehejia 2008). Created initially as gifts and trophies for the British in India, the silver became available soon thereafter for purchase in Europe, where it became the 'in' thing to have. Raj silverware reflects a remarkable amalgam of taste. Indian silversmiths created European forms to fulfil European requirements in the form of elegant tea services, tea caddies to store tea leaves, biscuit boxes, calling card cases, salvers, wine and water ewers, beer mugs and goblets and salt and pepper cellars. The silversmiths then adopted a unique manner of adorning these objects, displaying what was described as an Indian fondness for decoration. Silverware made in Madras would be covered with images of the gods; if created in Calcutta it would feature rural scenes; Kutch silversmiths would cover the pieces with tightly scrolled foliage, while those from Kashmir would feature the paisley design. The shape and function of Raj silver catered to colonial taste and demand, but its exterior surfaces displayed 'native' decorative skills in portraying local patterns and figuration.

Silver workshops ranged from British owned institutions like the renowned Peter Orr & Sons of Madras that won prizes in many international exhibitions, to entirely Indian owned workshops like the equally famed Oomersee Mawjee & Sons of Kutch. The fact that tea services covered with images of Hindu gods and known as 'Swami' silver, could become acceptable, even fashionable, in Europe is an intriguing historical occurrence. Still, it must be admitted that ultimately the most popular style, sold at Liberty & Co. of London, was the Kutch style of tightly scrolled foliage interspersed with animals and birds; made for them by their own workshops set up in Bombay, the motif had no connotations of idolatry.

Equally intriguing is the appearance of several themes in the silverware that were originally painted by gentleman artist Raja Ravi Varma in the late 19th century and soon thereafter converted into oleographs with a wide circulation. For instance, his famous, popular renderings of Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Krishna and Vishnu adorn a tea service. Raj silverware is utterly dazzling and merits display just for viewing pleasure; but of course, an exhibition is never put together just because the objects are exquisite. Curatorial enquiry must be at its base, enquiry into objects, themes, a milieu, but always enquiry. In the case of 'Delight in Design', the underlying sub-text running through the exhibition was the issue of the amalgam of taste and the prime question raised was 'Whose Taste?' When presented in gallery talks and public lectures, this question resulted in an active exchange of views on whether it was the Indian workshop artist or the British patron who was responsible for the choice of a specific decorative theme.

CONCLUSION: THE PROJECTION OF INDIA

What is the construction of India produced through these exhibitions and museum spaces? By and large, stone and bronze sculptures, miniature paintings, jewellery and silverware, speak of a sophisticated world, the upper class of an ancient milieu. Contemporary Indian art likewise speaks of an urban and urbane milieu. It is the wealthy social strata that sponsored the production of finely crafted images and exquisitely painted miniatures and also constitutes the purchasing audience for contemporary urban sculpture and painting. There is another whole world of vibrant works of everyday culture created by 'tribal' and 'village' India that are largely displayed in Natural History museums in the US and in Craft Museums in

India. A recent exhibition in Delhi, 'The Vernacular in the Contemporary', exhibited at a privileged venue, the Devi Art Foundation, curated by an art consultancy in Bangalore, challenges dated terminology and forces the viewer to recognise the power of works created outside of the urban milieu (Garimella 2010). In time, such works may take their place in art museum displays, both in India and the US.

In conclusion, I turn to the critical role of a national museum in constructing identity, an issue recognised by neighbouring China but neglected by India. In reopening its National Museum in April 2011, after a ten year renovation that cost $400 million, China showcased its history and culture as a monument to its rising power. China took advantage of a national museum's inbuilt opportunity to project national identity, confident in its belief that the museum would be more enduring and would do more for its image, than their previous triumph of hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games! India still has to appreciate the crucial role of a national museum. I offer the following as its proposed mission statement in the hope of encouraging future action:

We aspire to encourage discovery
of India's artistic heritage
and foster self-esteem in national identity
through a stimulating engagement
with important works of art.

Museums in India need to be a vital part of the community in which they are located and provide stimulating and innovative ways of making their institution into a favourite destination. When visitors feel drawn into building a lifelong engagement with the museum and feel that participating in its varied activities is a rewarding activity, those beautiful objects will have succeeded in their role of instilling pride in one's legacy. Museums are indeed 'certifiers of taste and definers of culture' (Karp 1992) that constitute a world in which every citizen has a stake.

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An Unclaimed Legacy

Examining and exhibiting photographic archives in India

PRAMOD KUMAR K G

ABSTRACT

The journey of photography in India is not dissimilar to the process of its evolution around the world. Many of the early innovations in the field took place during the work of photographers in India at that time. Exhibiting historic photographs in India has brought out a range of questions that affect their showing. Some of the issues are purely technical but a lot of the challenge is in the search for a curatorial ideology. The chance to catalogue and document many important photography archives in India has thrown up a wealth of surprising original materials that need fresh attention and newer interpretations. The paramount idea that should ideally guide the study of photographs is to understand that a photograph is an object of history and not an accessory of history.

INTRODUCTION

In the absence of a major national photography collection in India or a centre dedicated to photography and its dissemination as a historic discipline, private collections, foundations and individuals have stepped forward and filled this space. These newer archives have begun

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looking at photography as a document of history and as an art practice both in its historic context and its contemporary avatar. The National Museum at Delhi does not have a photography department with a dedicated collection. What they do have is a reprographic department called the photography section that takes photographs of objects in the museum's collection on requests. Some of the forums for photographic exhibitions in the country include the National Galleries of Modern Art across India and a slew of public and private galleries that periodically dabble in photography because of their mandate to promote art.

INDIAN PHOTOGRAPHY: EARLY HISTORY AND CURATORIAL VACUUM

The history of photography in India runs parallel to the history of photography across the world. The technical advancements made in the field from the 1840's have several innovations credited to photographers working in India. The extreme heat, dust, harsh light, varied landscape, vagaries of protocol and the bewildering array of subjects, all contributed in creating a smorgasbord of solutions to the myriad problems faced by photographers. From photographing women within the cloistered confines of the Zenana to taking panoramas of cities at daybreak before the maelstrom of daily activity; cameramen and women have innovated with their technique and projected their gaze to portray original visions of India, not withstanding some of the more popular Orientalist stereotypes.

Exhibiting historic photographs in India throw up a range of questions that affect their showing. Some of the issues are purely technical but a lot of the challenge is the search for a curatorial ideology. Technical problems are usually related to the suitability of the environment for display and the possible cumulative damage photographic prints undergo due to their exposure to the elements in non-sterile environments. However, curatorial issues at play are far more nuanced and might seem baffling to a layperson. The fact that of all the major visual arts, photography is a relative newcomer might just be one part of the problem.

Over the last six years, I have been fortunate enough to be part of a nascent group of professionals who are working with historic photographic collections in India, almost all of them in the private sector. The chance to catalogue and document many of these photography archives in India has thrown up surprising results. The wealth of photographic record available is truly unprecedented across a wide range of formats and materials dating from the early years of photography in India. While the camera as we know it is was invented in 1839, the first known advertisements for daguerreotype portraits came up almost immediately in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1840. The inaugural meeting of the Photographic Society of Bombay (Mumbai) in 1854 was soon to be followed with a photography class at the Elphinstone Institution in 1855 and by the setting up of photographic societies in Calcutta and Madras (Chennai) by 1856. It is indeed baffling that no concerted effort to retain this lead in photographic history was made in independent India and that in 2011 we are still grappling with issues of inadequate venues, improper lighting, photographic conservation technicians, archivists, framers, storage facilities, curators and critics. Amongst all our colonial baggage this was perhaps one area we would have benefitted by picking up on our historic legacy.

THE ALKAZI COLLECTION

My introduction to photographic archives began with the Alkazi Collection of Photography (ACP), a private trust based in Delhi with perhaps the foremost collection of photographs from the early days of the medium's history in India. Its enviable collection dating from the mid 19th century onwards includes wax paper and glass plate negatives, daguerreotypes, albumin, platinum and gelatin silver prints, along with a range of cameras and other photographic materials.

The ACP's collection is a vast repository of images from the British Raj and from informed purchases in auctions across the world and from dealers who brought Mr. Ebrahim Alkazi's attention a vast treasure trove of photographic materials. The riches of the collection are further affirmed with the works of a slew of major figures in the history of photography. While names such as Samuel Bourne and Raja Deen Dayal are commonplace, the collection also holds important works by pioneering masters such as Felice Beato, John Murray and James Waterhouse. The works of these early photographers and their invaluable contribution to the field, combined with the fact that this material was now available for study in India meant that the onus on the ACP to exhibit was enormous. The collection has been largely documented. A long list of planned publications has begun and today they have a series of critically acclaimed books out, highlighting important aspects of India's photographic history. An effective outreach mechanism was formulated and the foundation has been exhibiting originals and

Facsimile albums laid out for viewing with the original album on display in the glass topped table seen at far left. The images seen on the walls are original prints. Exhibition mounted by the Alkazi Collection of Photography at Arles, South of France, 2008

reproductions of its prints that accompany the release of each of its publications.

STORAGE AND CONSERVATION OF ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS

The showing of original 19th century prints in galleries overseas was not a problem, since most of these venues met with stringent lighting and humidity control levels as specified by conservators. The thought did cross my mind that these photographic prints were not stored in temperature controlled environments while in storage in India. However, the micro-climate at the Foundation was always stable and consistent. This was crucial since organic material like photographs deteriorate rapidly with fluctuations in temperature and light exposure. The impossibility of maintaining round-the-clock air conditioning because of frequent power outages and the prohibitive costs meant that most institutions maintained air conditioning for people and not for objects. Thus a nine-to-five working day meant that photographs went from a temperature of 22 degrees Celsius in the daytime to 40 degrees in the evening once the air conditioning was switched off. The damage to photographs in such an environment was huge and the Foundation decided on a pragmatic policy of keeping the photographs in a cool and stable non air conditioned environment. The summer and winter temperatures swings were gentled on the collection, as these were regulated by the gradual heating and cooling of the natural environment.

EXHIBITING CHALLENGES: THE ALKAZI COLLECTION

Similar concerns while exhibiting fragile 19th century photographic material in India meant that the showing of original vintage prints was restricted to venues like the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi and Mumbai. In most other cases, the foundation adopted the option of printing digital reproductions of original photographs. The decision to show reproductions

The external facade facing the main road of the Raja Deen Dayal photography exhibition at the IGNCA, New Delhi 2010-2011

in itself was not easy. Most international museums and galleries seldom accept exhibitions consisting of reproductions except for a stray reproduction or two in exhibitions consisting largely of original works of art. A carefully considered decision was taken to print very high quality reproductions of the vintage prints.

Contrary to popular perception, original photographs were not scanned to make copies. Photographs were digitally shot at very high resolution in controlled studio environments with great care taken to maintain tonal variations and contrasts in their reproduction. Several test prints were first executed to ensure that the colour range of the final print matched with the original photograph. Besides maintaining the tonal range of different photographers, it was also imperative to ensure that all the reproductions did not have one standard tone across all prints. The reproductions had to show different photographic processes of various eras that these were originally from. An image from the 1860's differed vastly in colour from one of the 1890's. By default, this insistence on perfect prints also necessitated fidelity in depicting the deterioration on the image due to ageing and poor handling. It was in exceptional cases that an irreparably deteriorated image needed cleaning up using Photoshop tools to restore the photographer's original image in its reprinted version. This was however an exception rather than the rule.

The curatorial strategy now called for another problem solving exercise with questions about the size of the reproduction. Since images were being reproduced, would it not have made sense to reproduce them to the same size as the original? A differing and more pragmatic approach was adopted. As the displayed objects were copies, it made sense to show them in larger scale for people to be able to enjoy the depth of detail that these views had on offer. The strategy was a resounding success, with enthusiastic audience reactions at several venues across India such as Lucknow, Chennai and Mumbai, wherever the ACP exhibited the photographs, over a period of five years. Today, sizes for reproduction of vintage prints vary from 61 centimetres x 50.8 centimetres, 61 centimetres

x 76.2 centimetres and 76.2 centimetres x 91.4 centimetres, depending on venue size and landscape or portrait format of image.

The most common feedback was that viewers felt they got a real sense of 19th and early 20th century India by being able to view large scale reproductions of people, places and monuments in the exhibition. Enlarged images seemed to convey a baffling reality and historical authenticity that perhaps smaller sized originals did not allow for. It was almost as if people could enter the photographs hung on the wall like a *mise-en-scene* and that somehow made it more real. If the goal was to reach out to newer audiences and disseminate a greater understanding of photography and its rich history in India, then the ACP's gambit played out spectacularly, venue after venue. Criticisms were expected and these were usually from connoisseurs and sometimes from photographers who were unsure about the use of reproductions when originals were available. Another popular strategy was the reproduction of facsimile albums that people could thumb through with the original left open to a section and displayed close at hand in a glass vitrine.

RAJA DEEN DAYAL'S PHOTOGRAPHS

The lessons in exhibiting photographs, both originals and reproductions, was played out in a much wider dimension when I co-curated with Dr. Jyotindra Jain, photographic material from the Raja Deen Dayal archives held by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) at Delhi. This large archive of works by a single pioneering photographer Raja Deen Dayal (1844-1905) meant that we were in a unique position to map out his journey across the photographic landscape of the country, with images from almost every time phase of his professional life. The fact that he had gone on to found an important studio across several cities in India and was universally acknowledged as the most important photographer of his time meant that audience expectations for viewing his photographic legacy was at an all time high. The Deen Dayal archives had been out of bounds for most scholars, since the IGNCA has acquired the collection from his heirs in 1989.
True to the best of bureaucratic tradition in India and vicissitudes of working in India, the project was an elongated affair. The first surprise was that contrary to popular belief, the collection of 'originals' was largely

Entrance Foyer of the Raja Deen Dayal photography exhibition at the IGNCA, New Delhi 2010-2011

Gallery view of the of the Raja Deen Dayal photography exhibition at the IGNCA, New Delhi 2010-2011

of glass plate negatives and not of original prints. The few 19th century prints in the collection were crumbling and not worthy of display and other prints were from the period when Deen Dayal's family ran the studio, much after his death. The original material was restricted to glass plate negatives which were however out of bounds for the curatorial team and we did not get to see it during the entire project. Nor was his extensive original camera equipment and studio registers made available to the curatorial team.

Field research across other collections in India with extensive Deen Dayal holdings allowed us to map his life, work and photographic practice. Inexplicably, the only material handed over for work was a DVD with low resolution images of the 2,857 glass plate negatives that had been originally printed in the silver bromide technique by the Deen Dayal family, before the collection was sold to the IGNCA.

The choices for display were very clear. The only way the exhibition could be mounted was by printing reproductions and extensive details of how this was achieved are mentioned in the technical comment section of the exhibition catalogue titled 'Raja Deen Dayal, The Studio Archives from the IGNCA Collection'. The curatorial strategy was very simple; to show images from the IGNCA collection that did not duplicate his already well known oeuvre, available in collections in India and other parts of the world. The exhibition that was held for three months at the large newly inaugurated venue of the IGNCA, was perhaps one of their most successful events. The attendance and enthusiastic reactions from lay audiences during the entire period of the exhibition have convinced me of the efficacy of showing large scale reproductions when conditions for showing originals are absent. Not showing originals is an option, but not showing reproductions is definitely not the answer if the idea is to popularise the medium of photography and its rich history in India.

THE UDAIPUR PALACE COLLECTION

One of the more interesting challenges in working with photography collections in India has been my

work with the Pictorial Archives of the Maharanas of Mewar at Udaipur. The vast and extensive collection is tantamount to our understanding of the true state of photography collections in other former princely states in India.

The Udaipur photography archives have remained virtually untouched and were maintained in the palace stores from the 1850s. Images in the collection document court proceedings and have captured many of the key players in court from the reign of Maharana Swaroop Singh (1842-61) onwards till the merger of the state with independent India in 1947 during the rule of Maharana Bhupal Singh (1930-47). The cataloguing covered more than 27,000 photographs in the collection. The cataloguing of the Udaipur archives has now set a role model for how photography collections can be collated and the riches of several collections be shared with and made available to the larger scholarly community.

Cataloguing of the collection also allowed for the creation of the first exhibition gallery dedicated to photography in any of the several palace museums within India. Working with a professional conservator also allowed us to create an environment that was non air conditioned but safe for the display of original vintage prints. Controlled light settings comparable to international standards were implemented and unique cost effective innovations were implemented to allow for the safe display of images. Detailed text panels at the Bhagwat Prakash Photography Gallery explain conservation methods in use at the gallery allowing for the safe viewing of historic material.

For visitors at the City Palace Museum Udaipur, the photography gallery comes at the far end of their tour of the museum. A fast trek around the 16th century palace complex takes at least one hour and visitor fatigue is very high by the time people get to the photography gallery. Visitors who do make it to the gallery are rewarded by what the new revamped galleries across the museum will look like in a few years' time, as the photography gallery is the prototype of the museum's renovation programme.

One of the critical lessons from setting up the Udaipur photography gallery has been the realisation that a full-fledged gallery dedicated to photography needs a calendar of events so that a new show goes up when the

Bhagwat Prakash Photography Gallery at the City Palace Museum, Udaipur

safe period of exhibiting vintage prints is over. Photos that have been exhibited for substantial periods of time, ideally three months at 50 lux light exposure, need to be put away to sleep for a substantial period before these are exposed to light or exhibited again. In effect, planning one exhibition means preparing for two shows within a time period of three to six months, allowing for a quick turnaround of shows. This is essential not just to satisfy visitor interest but also for the safekeeping of the collection. A delay in anticipating what would go up next meant that some of the original prints were on display for a year before reproductions were installed in the gallery.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES IN AND OUTSIDE INDIA

As evident, there are several issues at play in displaying original photographs at museum or quasi-museum venues. Due to lack of a concerted forum for discussion on curating and displaying photography, conservation standards meant for other visual arts are sometimes applied to the display of photographs. The stress and attention safeguarding this precious form of material culture might seem disproportionate to the time invested in curating and thinking of an exhibition story line while working with photographs. However, the importance of maintaining these archives underlines the fact that we have to leave something for future generations to interpret.

The history of photography in India has often been interpreted by collections that largely included photographs of India that were taken away by colonial masters or by ardent collectors. A lot of the material consists of photographs taken during British rule, by and for the Raj. The gaze of the photographer and very often of the interpreter or the curator is unequivocally that of an outsider looking at a society and a culture vastly different from theirs. Prevailing trends in taking photographs during the Raj were akin to their worldview of dominance with the stress being on the romantic, objectified and in pursuit of an exotic India.

Indians fed into every arrangement and configuration that an outsider could conceive. Very often a 'native' would go along to confirm a stereotype and play his part. In the hurry to interpret this visual history provided by photographs in collections outside India, images existing in archives across India of the same period, taken by local and foreign photographers for their Indian patrons with a different story to tell and a different India to show, got overlooked.

The last five years have been a very exciting time, with many archives, both in the former princely states and across other collections, being brought to public attention, with photographs presenting a more nuanced view of life in India. These show the camera's lens documenting formal court proceedings in the 1860s where a distant monarch looked away to avoid his soul from being captured and a few decades down move to show a more convivial setting in the 1920s when a ruler was seen amidst his people staring into the lens. The camera captured people, places and pageants, often fulfilling the role of the miniature painter and of a bard. These two were traditional chronicler of events at courts and of society in a continuum of earlier histories.

CONCLUSION

In examining this rich repository of visual material across the length and breadth of India, there is enough material for several generations of scholars, researchers and curators. The vision to seek out this material without biases and equipping themselves with informed tools and fresh eyes is the larger challenge. The absence of an organised cabal of people in the larger photographic community in India could however be detrimental to this process if not redressed at the earliest. A national centre for the preservation, organised study and dissemination of the photographic history of India is an urgent necessity. The study of a photograph as an object of history and not as an accessory of history to explain a point or an argument is a distinction that needs to be understood.

My biggest learning over six years of research across photography archives has been an eye opener in my understanding of the medium and its history in India. These newly emerging archives show us an India barely understood, with a larger story of a visual culture that has been examined mostly through the prism of holdings held outside India. Though well documented and exhibited with a great deal of exacting research, these histories still do not give us the full picture. To get to a truer understanding of a photographic history of India, the two halves of collections in India and outside would need to be studied together, with equal vigour for us to even begin to comprehend this composite whole.

Indian Manuscripts
Displaying intellectual history

SUDHA GOPALAKRISHNAN

ABSTRACT

India's astounding wealth of ancient knowledge belonging to different periods of history and different areas of intellectual activity is preserved in the form of manuscripts. These are found in libraries, academic institutions, museums, temples and monasteries and in private collections in India and abroad. The exhibition, 'The Word is Sacred, Sacred is the Word', sponsored by the National Mission for Manuscripts, held in Frankfurt, was the first to showcase our intellectual inheritance through manuscripts outside India. It highlighted the different traditions of writing manuscripts, oral cultures and indigenous methods of conservation. The manuscripts were written on unusual materials, shapes and sizes and with stunning calligraphy and artwork. This paper documents the process of making the exhibition; the excitement of discovery and selection, as also the challenges of organising the event through the complex procedural intricacies and routine governmental controls.

Sudha Gopalakrishnan was the founder director of the National Mission for Manuscripts, New Delhi. She has studied India's traditional arts forms for three decades, especially the performing arts of Kerala and is a trained dancer of Kathakali. Sudha was associated with UNESCO's intangible heritage stream as an expert and steered three successful nomination dossiers for India to UNESCO. Currently, she is the Executive Director of SAHAPEDIA, India, an online repository on Indian knowledge systems.

INTRODUCTION

India is magnificently advanced in intellectual and artistic activities, evidenced by the multiplicity of thoughts, languages, lifestyles and

Chitra Bhagavata

scientific, artistic and philosophical traditions handed down from the ancient and medieval times. This rich knowledge heritage was passed on in the early days through an oral tradition, but as time passed, it started getting recorded in manuscripts. India has possibly the oldest and the largest collection of manuscripts in the world, with an estimate of around five million. Written in several languages and scripts and inscribed in several media including palm leaf, stone, birch bark, leather and parchment, these are scattered across different libraries, archives, and museums and in private collections both in India and abroad.

The National Mission for Manuscripts, established as a five year programme in 2003, was the first consolidated national effort for reclaiming India's inheritance of knowledge contained in the vast treasure of manuscripts. Its goal was to locate, conserve, protect and tabulate the manuscripts. These will be uploaded on to the National Electronic Catalogue of Manuscripts or Kristisampada.

EXHIBITION OUTSIDE INDIA

There is a growing interest across the world in India's rich and diverse culture and knowledge systems, which go back to several hundreds of years. The exhibition, 'The Word is Sacred, Sacred is the Word', sponsored by the National Mission for Manuscripts, in the Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt, in September 2006, was the first to showcase the intellectual inheritance contained in Indian manuscripts abroad. It brought into focus multiple expressions; historical, intellectual, imaginative and artistic dimensions and sheer range of knowledge fields, languages, scripts, calligraphies and artistic traditions contained in Indian manuscripts. At first, we thought of calling the exhibition 'Akshar' (the alphabet), but we were not sure how this would be accepted in Germany. Later we came upon the title, 'The Word is Sacred, Sacred is the Word'.

This exhibition detailed the knowledge contained in Indian textual heritage in areas such as the sciences, philosophy, scripture, history and the arts. It highlighted the immense thematic range and significance of fields of knowledge as well as the role of specific texts in India's intellectual history and emphasised the lived and living contexts of these texts including the different modes of writing manuscripts, oral traditions and indigenous methods of conservation. At yet another level, it revealed the physical form of the manuscripts often written on unusual materials, in unusual shapes and sizes and with stunning calligraphy and artwork.

Primarily, the exhibition challenged the idea that Indian culture is antiquated and backward. But the curatorial attempt was to engage with India's manuscript tradition as not something frozen in time but open to constant engagement and re-interpretation.

The exhibition was part of the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2006 where India was the Guest of Honour for that year. B N Goswamy, the eminent art historian, took on the task of putting the show together as Commissioner and Curator of the Exhibition, in collaboration with Parthiv Shah as the Exhibition Designer. Inaugurated on October 1, 2006, it was on display at the river-side Museum für Angewandte Kunst until January 7, 2007. Thousands of visitors of all nationalities viewed the exhibition. Since it was one of the allied event during the book fair, it received more visibility and appreciation than perhaps it would have as a one-off event. After Frankfurt, the exhibition was brought back to India where it was on display at the National Archives of India in New Delhi for one month.

CHALLENGES IN SELECTION

The exhibition on Indian manuscripts, fascinating as an idea, posed several challenges for the organisers. To begin with, it had only about eight months for planning and completion. Despite his in-depth understanding and practiced skill in organising exhibitions, even B N Goswamy felt that this was a very short period of time for a theme of such magnitude and depth. He led a team of young committed and energetic professionals like Neha Paiwal, Vaibhav Chauhan, Abhimanyu Nohwar and others in the National Mission for Manuscripts.

The first challenge was the selection of manuscripts itself. What is the exact definition of a 'manuscript' and do all hand-written documents qualify for the term? How can the diversity of knowledge be adequately represented outside India from tens of thousands of texts? What criteria could be adopted to choose from among the five million manuscripts spread over thousands of collections, both public and private? Can a coherent account of the history of Indian manuscript writing be attempted? How will the exhibition effectively communicate the richness, variety and splendour of India's manuscripts to an international audience? The answers to these questions were complex, but it was necessary to deal with these before moving on.

The design team of Kiba Design chose colours and materials that reflected the warmth and texture of India, which stood out against the cool white of the museum architecture. The curator summed up the complexity of the issues of selection and representation in his introductory essay in the exhibition Catalogue (Goswamy 2007):

> To take an overview of the whole field of Indian manuscripts is no easy task. For the variety is bewildering; the history is remarkably long; regional differences defy description; there is constant overlap between materials, styles, formats. Nothing quite moves along predictable lines. A broad outline of chronology might be attempted, but suddenly something would surface to turn it on its head. If one were to say that birch-bark as a writing material was gradually replaced by palm leaf, and palm leaf by paper, for instance, no real sense could be made of the statement when one sees works on palm leaf still being turned out in large numbers in Orissa, or, say, in some parts of southern India. Or, again, birch-bark being still the preferred material for the writing of sacred mantras by Pandits in Kashmir. No skills have been lost, no materials discarded. Paper might be freely available in the northeast, but into the present century, sanchipat can be seen in wide use for the writing of ritual works like the Paphal or the Subika. The codex format, well-established in the country since at least the 14th century, might be seen as the norm, but texts of vrata-kathas and other religious texts continue to be printed in the traditional pothi-format, for that is the format which is 'sacred'. Major styles of painting – Rajasthani, Mughal, Pahari, Deccani, and the like – might be seen as having asserted themselves firmly, and yet well into the middle of the 19th century, manuscripts were being illustrated in Mysore, for instance, by local painters who show no respect, not even an awareness, of any of those styles and go about doing things entirely in their own individual, wonderful way. Texts like the Bhagavata Purana certainly have a classical status, but in Assam they were being illustrated till late into the 19th century in a style that was completely free of classical rigour and went about 'singing' the text in its own unique, carefree voice. It is as if a clear, definable pattern refuses to emerge, and centuries continue to co-exist.

While exploring answers to the critical problems, the definition of a manuscript was simple enough: a manuscript is a hand-written document dating back at least 75 years that has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value and is written in paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other such material. Broadly, these are distinct from historical records such as epigraphs or revenue records, because they have knowledge content.

The first criterion of selection is their outstanding value to the whole of humanity and also for their contribution to Indian life, significance to the development of Indian thought or the preservation of its culture. Sometimes, its value may simply be in the history it represents, for example, in recording an indigenous tradition and cosmology. In short, these are repositories of the knowledge of that period, without which life would have been substantially different for the present generation.

THE EXHIBITS

The exhibition attempted to present a microcosm of Indian manuscript heritage to the visitors, through 70 manuscripts and 20 related objects. It represented fields of learning through texts on art, medicine, theology, philosophy, mathematics, history, astrology and literature, not to mention ancient religious treatises. Consisting of more than 90 objects from over 15 repositories and private collections, the display represented India's various manuscript traditions from palm leaf to paper; from the veterinary science of

Gajayurveda

elephants to legendary romances; from the Brahmi of second century BC and the 15th century Archaic Meitei script from Manipur to the most recent Devanagari; from a garland shaped manuscript of Gita Govinda to an accordion shaped manuscript featuring Yantras. From the plainest manuscripts to the most exquisitely illustrated palm leaves and finely painted paper texts, the exhibition explored the Indian writing traditions in all their dimensions.

The exhibition display also included instruments and devices used in different regions to prepare manuscripts and in learning how to write. Employing rich colours such as brick red, copper, turmeric and Persian blue for the display cases and walls, the exhibition almost brought alive the original milieu in which these manuscripts would have been created and used. There were, on display, manuscripts from different religious traditions of India, in keeping with the multiple cultures that have created the culture of the sub-continent down the ages. Significantly, the process of writing a manuscript has been sacred in India and exhibits displayed images that showed the act of worshipping the manuscript, making these objects of veneration. Even today, in different places in India, manuscripts are regularly worshipped. We thus see a manuscripts culture in Indian history that is significant in understanding the knowledge cultures in present-day India; in places as far apart as Majuli in Assam, where the Bhagavata is a revered text, in Punjab where the Guru Granth Sahib is sacralised as 'Master' or in Kerala where there is a festival devoted to the worship of the book.

Some of the significant display items were a terracotta figurine belonging to the first or second century AD showing a young boy writing Brahmi characters on a wooden tablet; an Ashtasahasrika text of the 12th century one of the most important scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism; Garudopanisad and Bhagavadgita from the Oriental Research Institute, Mysore; exquisite Gitagovinda texts from Orissa in different shapes, sizes and material, including fish-shaped, garland-shaped and engraved on bamboo leaves; three dimensional palm-leaf manuscript of Thiruvasagam in the shape of Shiva lingam; Qissa-

i-Sultan Mahmud and Arda-Veraf of the Zoroastrian faith; Holy Quran lithograph from Kurukshetra, among others. Also displayed were artefacts used in the making of a manuscript, such as different varieties of stylus, inkpots or inkwells, paper knives, compasses and engraving tools, along with board slates, manuscript covers and boxes, boards and lamps, for depicting the process of writing.

Among the diverse fields of knowledge represented were scriptural texts like the Rigveda[1], the Old Testament [2], Holy Quran, Dasam Granth, Bhagavadgita and Jain cosmography[3]. Apart from this, different aspects of knowledge were showcased, such as:

- Navigational strategies - Malammi Pothi from 17th century.
- Architecture - Samarangan Sutradhara from 18th century.
- Study on horses - Shalihotra Shastra.
- Study on elephants - Palakapya Gajayurveda from the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur.
- Mathematics - Ganitaprahelika.
- Astrological predictions - Subika from Manipur.

Exquisite specimens of artwork were on display in manuscripts such as Kalpasutra of Bhadrabahu from the National Museum, Chitra Bhagavata of Assam, Ushavilasa from Orissa State Museum, Jnaneshvari from the collection of Dr. Harsha Dehejia, Sundara Shringara from the Chandigarh Museum and Art Gallery and Diwan-i-hafiz from the National Museum. The different styles of painting, illustrations and calligraphies of these manuscripts represented variations in styles, regions and individual talent, but revealed the elegance, exuberance and range of Indian craftsmanship.

CHALLENGES IN TRANSPORTING OBJECTS AND FABRICATION

While the exhibition somewhat succeeded in generating an international exposure to India's knowledge heritage contained in the many ancient folios, scripts, languages and images of its manuscripts, it was a tough task to make a truly representative selection, but even harder to access the material from all parts of the country.

In the absence of uniform standards of procedure and institutional protocols, the bottlenecks for obtaining original manuscripts were intricate, complex and often insurmountable. In many cases, the manuscripts were in a fragile condition and needed urgent conservation.

The assortment of knowledge archives being put together needed a variety of experts to interpret and bi-lingual texts had to be prepared for the catalogue in a short period of time. What was missing was a true reckoning and standards of assessment. The process of valuation of the original items was also cumbersome and arbitrary and often governed by individual judgment. However, more was to follow. When the artefacts reached German shores, the organisers had limited time at disposal for the fabrication and setting up of the exhibition. In spite of the time constraint, actual work hours in Germany end at 5-6 pm and it needed great effort to pull all-nighters to get the exhibition up in time. As a result, several finishing touches were left incomplete till the last minute and initially there was a mis-match in expectations, perception and functioning between the Indian and German counterparts, which reflected more as a cultural than a functional disparity.

The biggest surprise was still waiting. Unfortunately for the Indian team, one of the articles on display was a beautifully carved paper knife made of ivory and the Indian government had blithely given its permission to transport it to Germany. After the item cleared its way to reach the Museum für Angewandte Kunst, the implications became apparent because there are strict rules in Germany against the import of ivory and instead of being displayed, it was kept in safe custody. It was with great difficulty that the item was finally reclaimed by the organisers and accorded a safe passage back home.

The exhibition came back to India and had a one month stint at the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Many important manuscripts from the Archives, including the Gilgit manuscripts, the oldest cache of manuscripts in India, were added to the collection. Some significant additions were Padatisiksha, a trilingual manual on infantry; Shahnama, Firdausi's great epic and Razmnama, a Persian translation of the Mahabharata made at the orders of Emperor Akbar. The display was arranged in six sections:

- From clay to copper that showed the materials on which the written word was inscribed.
- The making of a manuscript that portrayed the tools used in writing.
- Fields of learning that showcased the knowledge traditions.
- How the manuscripts were an object of worship.
- Illustrated manuscripts.
- The royal and administrative orders.

CONCLUSION

Exhibitions on broad themes like Indian manuscripts promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the cultures, history and environment of India by spreading awareness on the rich knowledge traditions of India and the rare heritage value of manuscripts. These resources are crucial if scholars and educators and through them the public, are to understand our past and our times. But care must be taken to allot adequate time for mounting exhibitions abroad, to address the challenges arising out of the complex procedural intricacies, routine governmental controls and lack of professionalised inputs towards accessing and valuating the artefacts.

Acknowledgements

The source of images is National Mission for Manuscripts, Ministry of Culture, Government of India. All images are from an exhibition of Ancient Indian Manuscripts titled 'The Word is Sacred, Sacred is the Word', that went up at the Museum Fur Angewandte Kunst (Museum For Applied Arts) in Frankfurt, on September 4, 2006 and ran till January 2007. The Indian Government was invited by the German Ministry of Culture to exhibit a collection of some of India's finest manuscripts, as an inaugural event to the 2006 Frankfurt Book Fair, where India was the focus country.

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- Goswamy, B N 2007, *The Word is Sacred; Sacred is the Word: The Indian Manuscript Tradition,* National Mission for Manuscripts and Niyogi Books, New Delhi, pp. 11-47.

Notes

1 From Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Chennai.

2 Hebrew text from Kerala.

3 Sangrahani Sutra, 18th century.

Delhi Metro Museum

The chronicler of a new age revolution

ANUJ DAYAL

ABSTRACT

The Delhi Metro Museum, inaugurated on January 1, 2011, is a rare phenomenon for India, because it documents the rapid changes in contemporary urban India. The Museum in New Delhi is South Asia's first metro museum that chronicles the genesis and development of the capital's prideful Delhi Metro. It is possibly the only museum in a functional Metro station worldwide and has a rich display of precious photographs and models. The museum is important for India as a symbol of the tremendous progress experienced so far and lays emphasis on the significance of capturing the growth and aspirations of 21st century India and the ongoing mega infrastructural achievements. As a history museum, it is unique in India because it showcases the current changes as they occur in the country's second phase of nation-building.

INTRODUCTION

In India, museums are generally built to display valuable documents of the past. It is very rare to come across organisations that build museums to document their present achievements and create a treasure trove of information for the future generations to cherish. Delhi Metro has attempted to break this trend by building its museum just when the organisation had completed a decade of its existence.

Anuj Dayal is the head of Corporate Communications, Public Relations and Public Affairs for the Delhi Metro Project. He is from the 1985 Batch of Civil Services and working with the team that conceptualised, planned and implemented the Delhi Metro Museum. Anuj continues to be associated with the running of the Delhi Metro. He presented a paper at the All India Conference of the Museum Association of India held at Bhubaneswar in January 2011.

A view of the Delhi Metro Museum with the mannequin welcoming the visitors

The idea of building this museum came to me during a visit to the London Transport Museum. I was enthralled by this great habit of the British to document their achievements through museums. After that the process of collecting documents, papers and display materials for the museum started with a dedicated team working round- the-clock and finally we inaugurated the museum on January 1, 2009.

The Delhi Metro Museum situated at the Patel Chowk Metro Station is South Asia's first- ever Metro Museum which showcases the genesis and history of the Delhi Metro. It is possibly the only museum in a functional Metro station worldwide and has a rich display of precious photographs and models. The museum traces the genesis of the Delhi Metro which took 32 years to reach the operational stage from the drawing boards. All major milestones, issues regarding the selection of the technology have been displayed here. Metro's unique management style, earthquake-proof structures and the distinction of being the first railway project to claim carbon credits have been given prominence. Souvenirs such as Metro models, ties, pens, key-chains and books are available for sale at the museum.

METRO MUSEUMS: THE GLOBAL SCENARIO

Dedicated museums on Metro Rail systems are rather rare worldwide. In most of the countries of the developed world, Metro systems find a prominent place in the transport or in many cases railway museums. In Europe and the United States, there are many museums on tram systems and other light rail systems. The London Transport Museum, established in 1980 has a rich collection of exhibits and other display materials on the London Tube, which is the oldest Metro system in the world. Similarly in the United States, the New York Transit Museum treasures display materials about all the modes of public transport operational in the city including the subway system there. The United States has many more museums with rich collections of data on Metro systems.

The Paris Transport Museum or the Musée des transports urbains also has display materials about the city's subway system along with the other modes of transport. Many old or abandoned Metro stations in Paris; Stockholm, Sweden and St. Petersburg, Russia, have been converted into museums which are a visual

and intellectual treat for the visitors and researchers. In New Delhi, the older National Rail Museum is a massive treasure house of information. After all, documenting one of the biggest railway systems in the world is no mean task. However, the Delhi Metro Museum is more dynamic and modern. The organisation's limited history has been presented very well, while in the rail museum, a lot of vital information or displays almost go unnoticed because of the sheer size of the museum.

THE FIRST IN SOUTH ASIA

The impetus on building world-class cities in the South Asian countries is a recent phenomenon. Therefore, while a lot of cities are planning or constructing Metro systems, as of now, only Kolkata has an operational Metro system apart from Delhi. Considering such a scenario, the importance of the Delhi Metro Museum increases manifold.

This museum is not only an attraction for the tourists visiting the city, but also offers a wealth of information and data to young engineers and researchers who are involved with Metro projects in the other cities. There are interactive pods that show videos and films on many technical aspects such as the working of the Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) and segment launchers. In fact, the Delhi Metro has included a visit to the museum, as a part of its training module at the Training School, where budding engineers and operations officials of India's major Metro projects receive training.

In many ways, the museum is also showing the way to the other cities that are implementing or planning Metro systems. Officials from Bangladesh and Pakistan have also visited the museum in the last couple of years. Many students from prestigious universities and colleges worldwide such as Stanford University, Columbia University, Carlson School and Yale University have also visited the museum to gather knowledge about the Delhi Metro, which is the most successful public transport project executed in the country so far.

A visitors' register is maintained at the museum to record feedback and draw creative ideas. A lot of valuable suggestions, such as the idea of making the museum a bilingual one, have come to us so far. A large exhibit showing the map of where the Metro lines are and where the new lines are being planned is the most popular display in the museum. It has been designed attractively with blinkers to indicate the operational routes. Apart from the museum visitors, commuters also throng to this panel because it becomes very easy for them to locate their destinations from the map.

A Nepalese Parliamentary delegation wrote: 'Delhi Metro shows how India is progressing'. Obviously, the Metro is being seen as a symbol of the country's progress. A group of Indian Administrative Service officers once wrote about the museum: 'it's a wonderful piece of human creativity and mental dynamism'. Subroto Sen, a visitor wrote that the museum is very informative and an example for Kolkata Metro.

BEHIND THE SCENE STORY

The process of collecting the artefacts was challenging because even we did not clearly know what would be worth exhibiting in the museum. There were valuable artefacts such as cutter heads of the tunnel boring machines and station manager kits, but we did not have any other Metro museum in India to draw inspiration. There was a dedicated team that coordinated with all the departments and collected the artefacts. We asked a few officials to contribute their personal memorabilia. However, the bulk of the artefacts were collected from the offices and construction sites.

The London Transport Museum is located at Covent Garden in the central part of London and the museum is a massive structure consisting of two floors. It has old buses and carriages also displayed inside. It has simulators for the public and many interactive audio-video displays that chronicle the history of transport in London. In comparison, the Delhi Metro Museum is much smaller though more contemporary in its content.

However, the journey towards building this museum was fraught with challenges. The initial hurdle that we faced was regarding the choice of a suitable venue. We wanted to build the museum at a location that could be easily accessible from all parts of the city. This was the reason why the Patel Chowk Metro station was chosen, as it is located in the central part of the national capital and is accessible by buses and the Metro. The 'interchange stations' would certainly have been a better option from the point of view of attracting more visitors. However, with massive numbers of commuters using those stations, it would have become very difficult to maintain the requisite sanctity necessary for a museum. We did explore the possibility of having the museum at Rajiv Chowk, our biggest station in central Delhi, but with over 500,000 people using the station

Panel displaying construction of the Chawri Bazaar Station

every day, it would have been difficult to manage. The challenge of building the museum in an operational station was also not easy as we could not obstruct the movement of the passengers even for an hour. Also, there were issues related to the installation of lights and fire resistant structures in the station without damaging its ambience.

The primary reason for starting the museum in a functional station was more of a compulsion because there was no ready space available outside the station structures to start the museum. However, we were keen to start the museum soon. I am happy that the idea paid off. Today, because the museum is at a functional station, we have been able to attract more visitors.

All this while, a dedicated team was busy collecting materials for the museum and preparing write-ups for the display panels. We had to be very cautious during this tedious process and any incorrect information would have put a major question mark on the credibility of the entire endeavour.

Finally, about 26 panels dealing with various aspects of Metro operations, along with models of Metro stations, trains, tunnel boring machines and the operations control centre were put together. Employees from both the projects and operations wing participated. They were involved in collecting the displays as well as in providing the necessary assistance in opening the museum. Engineers from the construction sites helped us in collecting soil samples and TBM models and officials from the operations wings helped us getting all the clearances such as fire safety.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

The main attractions of the museum are the display and text panels made of stainless steel and fire resistant fibre sheets with wooden texture. The content included Metro's unique management style, earthquake-proof structures, the distinction of being the first railway project to claim carbon credits and choice of gauge for the Metro system. The language of these panels was very carefully written to ensure that it was free from unnecessary technical jargons and understandable to people from all sections of the society. The panels were also designed with photographs so that the visitors could immediately relate to them. The museum is enriched by working models of the Operations Control Centre (OCC), close circuit television cameras and the tunnel boring machine. These operational models which display how the OCC or the TBM works are a major hit with the visitors. Apart from these, there

are also models of the Metro train and stations. The working models give a glimpse of the technical complexities of the entire Metro project and inform the visitors about the behind-the-scenes activities that ensure the smooth running of the Metro. The visitors are not allowed to touch the models as these are sensitive and not very easily repairable. Text panels accompany these models.

Attractive mannequins of the Delhi Metro mascot, operations and projects staff greet the visitors to the museum and also display the discipline that these uniforms instil in the employees of the organisation. Metros are technically complex but the human angle can never be ignored. A seven thousand strong team of professionals run the Delhi Metro and these mannequins are a tribute to their professionalism and commitment. The mannequins are very popular among the children who are often seen crowding these.

The awards and certificates won by the Delhi Metro also find a place of pride in the museum. Soil samples from the construction sites, the kits of the station managers and train operators are unconventional displays that show the hard work that goes behind running 200 Metro trains on a network of 190 kilometres everyday from 6 AM till 11 PM. We did not try to follow any set formula while collecting the items. Instead, we tried to look at the importance of the exhibits in the story-telling context of the entire Metro project. Soil samples are important because they decide the mode of technology that is to be used for construction. A station manager kit is also interesting because a decade later the kit may look different with changing technology. Then, it would be very interesting to compare the two.

Besides these collections, the museum also has a rich collection of rare photographs chronicling the achievements of the organisation. Photographs of the first day of Delhi Metro's operations in 2002, when the former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had inaugurated the stretch from Shahdara to Tis Hazari and the first batch of operations staff during their training tour to Singapore, find a place in the photo gallery. The photograph of Delhi Metro's first-ever train operator is also displayed.

The audio-video pods installed in the museum screen films in English on Delhi Metro along with technical

Panel with photographs at the Metro Station

presentations on the working of the tunnel boring machines and segment launchers. But plans are there to make them bilingual. The technical presentations may not be of much interest to the layman. However, these are of great value to engineering students and researchers.

The addition of a rich souvenir shop has now made the museum even more attractive. The kiosk has something for all ages and genders. While the kids can take away attractive push back Metro toy trains and Ludo games, the elders can purchase merchandise such as Metro key chains and bookmarks at reasonable prices.

The Metro Museum also conducts visits of school children from more than a hundred schools from across India to educate them about the Metro. Quiz shows and art competitions have also been organised in the past for the school children at the museum.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Buoyed by the positive response from the people, the Metro Museum is now on an expansion spree. More display panels, on the lines of the ones put up at Patel Chowk have now been installed at many other Metro stations of the network such as Rajiv Chowk, Kashmere Gate, Akshardham and the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. We are considering including both panels and artefacts in this process. We want to increase our treasure of artefacts as much as possible so that we can move to a bigger venue some time later and put all these items and panels on display. Patel Chowk will not lose its value or position, because the entire concourse of the station has been converted into museum. The same cannot be done in the other stations.

CONCLUSION

Like the Delhi Metro system itself, the Metro museum is also a trendsetter. It exemplifies the importance of documenting and chronicling the ongoing mega infrastructural achievements of the country.

This museum is important for India because it is a symbol of the tremendous progress that this country has experienced so far. If the other developmental projects in different parts of the country also establish similar niche museums, then the future generations will get an opportunity to learn about the work that went behind the key developmental projects of this century. We do not endeavour to consciously display the economic strides. However, the Metro project itself is a symbol of India's success story.

Archiving Corporate Memory

VRUNDA PATHARE

ABSTRACT

Though history takes on numerous cultural forms traditionally, the keeping of records and archiving these is not as common in India as one wishes it to be. Institutionalisation of information is quite a rare phenomenon. Business houses are no exception to this. Company records form the most valuable yet the most under-utilised sources of business history. Over the last decade we observe a steady growth in the general awareness for preservation and the use of business records. Such archives will not only assist a company to sort, select and store historically important records but can also play an important role in communicating to the outside world the contribution of the business house to the country, its society and its people. This paper will explore corporate archives, especially the Godrej experience, as a form of organisational memory and as a part of wider historical, industrial and corporate memory of a nation.

INTRODUCTION

'To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?'

- Marcus Tullius Cicero

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The post-globalisation scenario in our country witnessed accelerated economic growth, rapid urbanisation and emphasis on science, technology and more recent information technology. All this has also led to the transformation of not only our beliefs, but also our identity as a community; cultural, national, environmental, institutional and individual.

Identity is embedded in our memory of the past and memory manifests itself in different forms that remain as points of reference; from tangible to intangible, from monuments to records. History cannot be written

Ardeshir Godrej, the Founder of Godrej Group

without these and historians call these points of references 'sources'. They give us a sense of 'historic continuity' that helps maintain a link between the past and the future. Just like societies record and archive their pasts, organisations must also preserve their memory by recording the ideas and events that influenced their growth.

Everything that we create in order to communicate helps us reconstruct memory. Documents, manuscripts, letters, publications, photos, memorabilia and in this age of communication even emails, blogs and social networking websites do reflect the way the society or any organisation chooses to think and express. As a result of the rapid increase in high-tech communications, we are bombarded with information overload. How much of this will be preserved for future? Information thus created is a significant part of our existence or our collective memory and if not saved today, would otherwise disappear or be forgotten.

In India, institutionalisation of information is still a rare phenomenon. Though history takes on numerous cultural forms traditionally, the keeping of records and archiving them is not as common as one wishes it to be. Business houses are no exception to this. However, businesses are now responsible to the society and the environment besides their capital, stock and shareholders.

Every organisation, howsoever technical, also has another side, the thought process that has contributed to many a major decision over a period of time. The history of any organisation, especially its landmark events, necessarily follows a course etched by these records. Records serve as tools and sources for an empathic understanding of the past (Gorakshkar 2006). It is therefore imperative for every corporate business house to preserve the corporate memory by archiving their activities in an organised manner and the most effective measure would be establishment of business archives of their own.

Over the last decade we observe a steady growth in the general awareness for preservation and the use of business records and more and more companies are contemplating setting up the archives. Undoubtedly, such archives will not only assist a company to sort, select and store historically important records but these can also play an important role in communicating to the outside world the contribution of the business house to the country, its society and its people.

BUSINESS ARCHIVES IN INDIA

The 'scientification' of history that took place around 19th century emphasised the idea that the true writing of history had to be based on a critical appraisal of authentic (textual) source material from the past. The opening sentence of the 'Introduction aux etudes historiques', published in 1898 by Charles-Victor 'L'historire se fait avec des documents' echoed this idea that became the anchor point of scientific historiography. The emphasis on documents for true writing of history necessitated the methodical and systematic collection of these documents at a single place, 'the archive'. Thus the birth of scientific

historiography was also accompanied by the emergence of archive (Tollebeek 2004).

Though Indians were not averse to keeping records[1], the idea of archives in this modern sense of the term was a product of the colonial period. In 1891, on the recommendation of the Civil Auditor to transfer all the records of the Government to a 'Grand Central Arsenal', the Imperial Department was established in Calcutta. After the transfer of the capital to Delhi, even this Department was shifted to New Delhi in the year 1911 and came to be known as National Archives after independence.

However, till recently the concept of archives was restricted only to government records. The enactments such as the *Public Records Act 1993* only cover public records or government records and in spite of the resolution passed at the Indian Historical Records Commission way back in its 58th session, business records or records of private enterprises were never the concern of the archiving world.

Here, it is necessary to understand the evolution of business history as a discipline that eventually necessitated the use of corporate records for its writing. The first half of the 20th century saw the emergence of business history as a discipline separate from economic history. The founding of business history as a separate, academic pursuit would be credited to Wallace B Donham, who served as the dean of the Harvard Business School from 1919 to 1942. He believed that only historical insight into past business dealings could give business students an idea of how to operate successfully in the business field and during his tenure, Harvard rose to be the centre for the world of business history. During this period, business history remained confined to company history. The arrival of Alfred Dupont Chandler, Jr. on the scene in mid-1950s brought in a more comprehensive approach to the study of business. By 1960s, Business historians started reconsidering the definition of business history and broadened the meaning and the scope of business history beyond company history.

Business education laid its foundation in India with the creation of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad in 1961. Initial collaboration with Harvard Business School, Boston, USA, greatly influenced the Institute's approach to education and a new course on the subject of business history was introduced in the post-graduate curriculum. Dr. Dwijendra Tripathi, a business historian, was appointed as a member of the faculty. At this time there was little awareness about business history in the country even among the historians let alone business people. Tripathi (1984) recorded that: 'In the eyes of many in the profession, exploring the business past lay somewhat beyond the historian's legitimate function'. He also noted the remark of one historian at Indian History Congress in 1965: 'The task be better left to the businessmen themselves'. Around this time, the literature available on the subject was also not substantial. Focus of the existing literature on the subject was mostly pre-British economic history with only peripheral references to business. The other literature mostly consists of biographies, memoirs of prominent businessmen and souvenir volumes of companies. However, these works suffered from 'narcissism' and lack objectivity, as in most cases these were written either by businessmen themselves or authors commissioned by the company or a firm. It is this unreliability that brought a need for a new system of record keeping in business. In 1966, in the 37th session of the Indian Historical Records Commission the first ever discussion was held on the 'Sources and problems of Business History in India'.

Business records created by business houses constitute valuable source material for writing history of business. However, these are not easily available for the researchers. The reason for the unavailability is twofold: First, the indifference on part of business houses in the upkeep of records and information; second, if at all records are available these are closely guarded in the strong rooms of the business houses. Thus more than the lack of scholarly interest, the absence of organised archives of business houses in India provides an explanation for the reluctance on part of scholars to explore various facets of business history. Realising this, a resolution was passed in the 58th Session of Indian Historical Records Commission (Resolution VI) stating that all necessary steps should be taken to identify and list business houses that may be willing to make their records available for research and/or require help in the matter of cataloguing and preserving their holdings so that these holdings are easily accessible to researchers. In spite of this resolution, very few business houses have taken the initiative in archiving their information.

Tata Central Archives of Tata Group of Companies at Pune was the first of its kind initiative in India, on part of a corporate house to preserve its history through records in an institutionalised way. Few other business houses followed the suit. Godrej Group of Companies was one of these.

GODREJ ARCHIVES: THE BEGINNING

To preserve the business legacy, Godrej thought of setting up the Godrej Archives as early as 1995, when preparations began for 1997 centenary celebrations. It was a brain child of the late Shri Sohrab Godrej, popularly known as 'Soli'. In his note to the Centenary Committee, dated December 19, 1995, he envisioned the archives to be a heritage centre offering invaluable archival material for reference and research. He spelt out the objectives of archives as follows:

- To help people understand the company's ethos and growth.
- To appreciate the quality of men who shaped these.
- To trace the Company's values and commitments from the founder's vision to the present-day technological advances.

Godrej Archives aimed to create sources for understanding of the business; its evolution over the period of time, through the efforts and experience of generations of Godrej Family and generations of workers. An archives committee was set up and the search began for old records in form of documents, products and advertisements. In March 1996 an appeal was made to general public through a newspaper advertisement to contribute if they have any old Godrej product, advertisements or any such documents referring to Godrej's past. This got an overwhelming response. Mr. Pesi Muncherji, a Godrej veteran, dedicated himself to the task of collecting and listing old documents and photographs. Based on these documents were brought out two volumes on Godrej history: 'Godrej – A Hundred Years 1897-1997' authored by Mr. B K Karanjia.

In February 2006, a professional archivist was appointed to sort, arrange and catalogue the Godrej history. 'Godrej Archives' was envisioned to be 'an institute of life-long learning to create awareness about business history and archives'. With this, the journey towards creating corporate memory of Godrej Group began. The word 'archives' itself was an unfamiliar term for the business world. Archivists had to face questions like 'Why an archive?' or 'Why to delve into the past when business has to look forward?' Even though the management conceived the concept, it had to percolate vertically as well as horizontally within the group. It certainly wasn't a cakewalk for the archivist.

The first task of the archivist was to develop a collection policy for the organisation and to establish a process to select and preserve important records for posterity. It was believed that the existence of such policy would not only promote a record-keeping culture but would also create a climate that will ensure the on-going integrity and accessibility of records, in turn guaranteeing the continued contribution of records to the archives. The policy was to define the nature and scope of the collection. It listed out business records such as minutes of meetings, annual reports, project reports, key correspondence, agreements, contracts, financial records, sales and marketing literature, publicity material, press releases, drawings, photographs, film and tape recordings, as historically important records that are to be preserved for posterity.

Records embodying the decisions and development of a company policy and practice do not speak for themselves. These find meaning when juxtaposed with the social, economic and political conditions prevalent in those times and a business narrative can emerge from such collection. Business does get influenced by national and local economies and its success and failure, in turn, affects the lives of all employees or consumers. The history of business therefore cannot be discussed in isolation without studying the character of economy as well as society at the same point in time.

A CORPORATE MEMORY

The Godrej story that began as an individual's response to the 'Swadeshi', that is, economic autonomy spirit of the era, also represents the post-colonial industrial activity enthused with the dream of new resurgent India. The business archive collections at Godrej Archives not only capture these facets of the Indian business history but also highlight the responses of Indian companies like Godrej to changing political and economic conditions.

In the late 19th century, the emergence of middle class and a growing sense of disillusionment with the British government found expression in the writings of Dadabhai Naoroji, M G Ranade and others. 'These writings criticised the exploitation of Indian resources for the benefit of Great Britain and instigated the growing sense of identity in Indian business interests and the rising nationalist tendencies in society as a whole' (Tripathi & Jumani 2007 p. 78). This provided a great deal of impetus to the idea of Swadeshi. Even the businessmen and industrialists could not remain untouched by the Swadeshi spirit of the era. Ardeshir Godrej[2], swayed in by Dadabhai Naoroji's writings, believed that political independence will be meaningless without economic independence and in

Advertisement featuring Annie Besant, the leader of the Home Rule League Movement, endorsing Godrej Soap No.1 & 2, dated August 25, 1947

order to achieve this, India must reduce its dependence on the West. With this belief, he started manufacturing locks in the year 1897. He went on to make safes and security equipment and then created toilet soap from vegetable oil. The Ardeshir Godrej Papers in the Godrej Archives collections not only provide clues about the era that moulded Ardeshir's beliefs but also help understand the relationship between Indian businesses and the government before independence.

The period after World War I witnessed a change of attitude of the government that was now willing to appease the native business instead of alienating it (Tripathi & Jumani 2007, p. 91). Godrej also bagged large orders for safes from the Posts and Telegraphs Department of the British Government during this period and by 1928 it had already supplied more than two thousand safes to government offices. The administrative report of the Government of India for 1927-28 regarding Indian Stores Department stated that Indian made safes had taken the place of safes of European manufacture formerly used in the Indian Posts and Telegraph Department (*Times* August 23, 1928). An article published in the Indian Herald in the year 1928, illustrated the Godrej example to urge the government to consider development of capabilities of Indian Industries.[3]

The Great Depression and later the outbreak of the Second World War compelled the complete transformation in the government's attitude towards the Indian industries and war pressures increased the government dependability on Indian manufacturers. The decade of 1930s witnessed the emergence of two industries in the State of Bombay (now Maharashtra), machine tools and automobile (Chaudhari 1987, p. 52).

Till the beginning of the war, machine tools were imported. Opportunities opened on the eve of the Second World War for many Indian manufacturers especially in machine tools industry as the Government started placing large orders with Indian firms like Kirloskar Brothers. Godrej Tool Room was also established at Mumbai during this


THE Godrej

CONTRIBUTION to BUILDING the NEW INDIA

A Supplement to The Indian Express

FROM SMALL BEGINNING TO GIANT FACTORIES

The Godrej Story

Mr. Nehru Typing

Free Enterprise Can Help To Build The Welfare State

A special supplement brought out by Godrej in all the leading newspapers at the time of the launch of the first Indian made typewriter manufactured by Godrej in the year 1955.


INDIAN MADE SAFES FO, POSTAL DEPARTMENT.

CONTRACT FOR GODREJ'S FIRM.

In the administration report of the Government of India, for 1927-28 regarding the Indian Stores Department it is stated that Indian made safes have now taken the place of safes of European manufacture formerly used in the Indian Posts and Telegraph Department. In this connection it is interesting to learn that the Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Co. the well-known Indian firm of makers of safes have secured a two years' contract from the Government of India to supply safes to the Indian Posts and Telegraph Department. This is not the first occasion on which the firm is supplying safes to the Department as it has already supplied about 2,000 safes to it previously.

'Indian made safes for Postal Department', Times, August 23, 1928

period, that is, in the year 1935. There is no substantial documentary evidence in the archives to conclude if Godrej Tool Room was the result of such government encouragement but it certainly was an indication of the changing environment.

At the dawn of independence, India dreamt of being self-sufficient in agricultural and industrial production and to achieve this self-sufficiency, the Indian leadership believed in technology and progress, industrialisation and machines. It was felt that for sustained progress, India must itself undertake to produce what it needs. Thus, independence opened up new vista of opportunities for Indian industries as they were to play an important part in the development of national capabilities. The late Mr. J R D Tata reflected on this era and remarked that 'the performance of Indian economy from mid-fifties and mid-sixties reflected the soundness of the mixed economy as originally conceived' (*The Times of India* July 12, 1981). This period of growth also witnessed some challenging times in face of acute steel shortage, license raj, and import restrictions. Such was impact of the steel shortage, as one of the documents in this collection reveals that in the year 1963 nearly 500 workers had to be laid off.

The period after independence was particularly significant for Godrej, as new sprawling Godrej Industrial Township was taking shape in the newly acquired land at Vikhroli in Mumbai and was to undertake manufacturing products like typewriter that India had hitherto imported.

Plant-1 at Vikhroli started with manufacturing of more than 1.2 million ballot boxes for the first election of Independent India in the year 1951. At the treasure trove at the defunct factory premise at Lalbaug in central part of Mumbai, the archives' team could recover an old ballot box. This ballot box along with

its technical drawings and records related to delivery and dispatch of these ballot boxes, are one of the proud possessions of Godrej Archives.

Mr. Thanewalla, then a Supervisor at Plant-1 recalled in his oral history interview with Godrej Archives[4]:

> I started in Vikhroli making ballot boxes. When we all shifted there a big order for ballot boxes came in. I think I don't know finally how many ballot boxes we ended up making (but we manufactured) about 15 or 17 lacs and at our best I think we were producing 22 thousand ballot boxes per day. Pirojsha Godrej5 (used to be) promptly there at 3 o'clock every afternoon asking us how it is going. Pirojsha (used to) send his car for us. Bring my boys home. So we (supervisors) used to get the car and come home. All the workers used to go by train. So that is how we started Vikhroli.

A historical narrative cannot be complete without such personal memories that fill in the gaps found in records. Therefore, Godrej Archives is also creating new resources for the history of Godrej in the form of oral history interviews with individuals associated with the company for decades. Such oral memoirs also help the researcher to fill in the facts that might have gone unrecorded in the files.

Many a times, these have also helped in contextualising photographs in the collection. The photographs of

Pirojsha Godrej, younger brother of Ardeshir, surveying newly acquired land in Vikhroli (late 1940s)

Advertisement of ballot boxes made by Godrej for Independent India's first Election of 1952. Advertisement in Times of India dated December 24, 1951

women workers on the shop floor in early 1970s baffled the archives team because during this period Godrej never employed women for the shop-floor jobs. This mystery got resolved when Mr. Thanewalla who set up the Malaysia Plant in late 1960s which was the first venture abroad for Godrej shared the story[6]:

> There (in Malaysia) girls had to be employed. When I was employing no girls, my neighbour - the Fiat assembly plant manager, a Frenchman called Rene who had been there for 20 years, said, "Employ girls." I said we didn't employ girls in Godrej. (He said,) "That's in India. If you don't employ girls you will go broke. Malay (men) won't work. Girls will work." So we started employing girls.

ARCHIVES AND EXHIBITIONS

It is essential to ensure the sustainability of the archives; otherwise these may be reduced to an attic room of the offices, in any business organisation. In order to be future-proof, archives must ensure that the company recognises its history as a unique corporate asset and the role that the archives play as the knowledge and information centre. The information contained in business records can be appropriately used for

Exhibition Panel marking '60 Years of Godrej Industrial Township' at Vikhroli, Mumbai, at the Board of Directors' Meet 2011

supporting promotional activities organised by corporate communications, employee engagement, writing brand and product histories, innovative ideas for business development, display and publicity, presentations, legal evidence and so on. It also becomes important for any archivist to breathe life into the otherwise inanimate records. To achieve this, several promotional tools such as websites, in-house magazine and periodic exhibitions can be employed by the archives. Business museum can be an extended arm of business archives to communicate to a larger audience.

CONCLUSION

The company archives are often considered a brand-building activity. The emphasis on the role of the archives in facilitating institutional publicity, poses a challenge for the company archivist to encourage critical writing of Company's history.[7]

However, the initiative on part of companies to open an archive itself is a welcomed gesture. The information available here in diverse forms such as correspondence, advertisements, photographs, films, posters and packaging, memorabilia or old products is valuable source for historians to understand the corporate past of the country on macro level and that of the company at micro level. The comprehensive understanding of history emerges through a grasp of these multiple sources of evidences. If studied not in isolation but in corroboration, these will definitely open new vistas for scholars to investigate in the field of business history, which in turn might encourage a critical writing of corporate or business history.

Acknowledgements

All images are sourced from Godrej Archives, Mumbai.

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Notes

1 In many travelogues of ancient as well as medieval period we find references to records offices of various kings. Huen Tsang who was in India from 630 to 644 mentions records office – Nilopita where "good or bad are recorded, and instances of calamity and good fortune, are set forth in detail." Arthashatra mentions about 'Akshapatala' which was 'office of accounts' and considers creation of records as one of the duties of King. Sukraniti even states that 'no business of the state was done without a written document'. Abdur Razzaq who visited Vijaynagar in 1442 mentions that in front of the Diwan-khana or minister's office, there was a raised gallery where records were kept. The Akbarnama also gives a description as to how Emperor Akbar had established a Records office called 'Daftar Kahna' in 1574 which was situated close to the Emperor's Palace at Fatehpur Sikri. This tradition of maintaining records is also evident during Maratha period and Peshwa Daftar holding the administrative papers of Peshwas is still extant.

2 Ardeshir Burjorji Sorabji Godrej (1868–1936) was co-founder of the Godrej Brothers Company, the precursor of the Godrej Group of companies.

3 Godrej Archives Collection MS06-01-94-77.

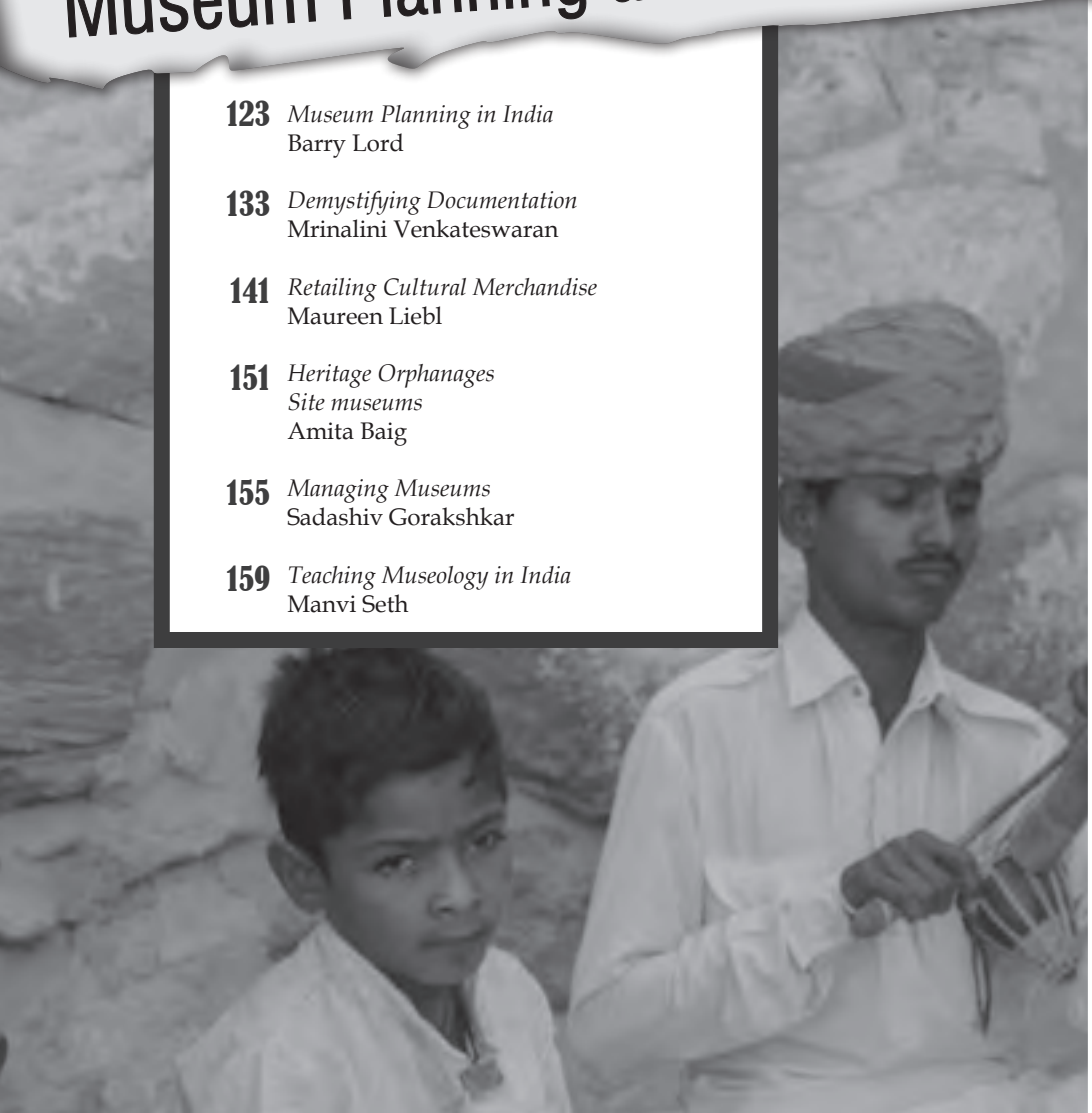
4 Godrej Archives Oral History Collection, OH06-002.

5 Pirojsha Godrej, younger brother of Ardeshir Godrej joined the business in the year 1906. Pirojsha laid the foundation for the sprawling industrial garden township now called Pirojshanagar in the suburbs of Mumbai, where the Godrej Group has its headquarters.

6 Godrej Archives Oral History Collection, OH06-002.

7 Dr. Indira Chowdhury (2006) discusses the problems of Institutional Archives which can also be applied to Corporate Archives. She observes: 'Ideally, the relationship between Institutional Archives and the Institution is one of reciprocity: Institutions need their own Archives for their own legal, administrative and academic records, while the Archives in turn requires institutional support for its own survival. Yet, the dependence of the Archives on institutional support is problematic in itself, since institutional support could often translate into institutional control. Indeed, the power of an institution to control its archival activities can extend from archival organisation and the kind of material made available, to the monitoring of access. This could, consequently, lead to the creation of an archive that confirms and echoes the master narrative of institutional history put in place by the institution itself.'

Museum Planning and Maintenance



Museum Planning in India

BARRY LORD

ABSTRACT

India has magnificent historic sites and a rich material and immaterial heritage. Yet, many of India's museums do not match the quality and importance of their site or collections with adequate facilities. Further, museum visitors are not provided with the aesthetic or intellectual enjoyment or learning experiences that they deserve while visiting these institutions. There is a need to identify the opportunity provided by museum planning to upgrade the quality and impact of India's museums. The planning process can benefit tiny local museums as much as large metropolitan ones, although implementation of the plans depends on access to funding. The value of the planning process is long lasting for all concerned, be it governing authorities, professional staff or visitors.

INTRODUCTION

India is rich in archaeological sites, architectural heritage and museum collections. Indian museology dates back to the late 18th and early 19th century, when the British began inventing documentation systems to record the dense cultural heritage that surrounded them here. Long before that date, enlightened Indian rulers and lesser nobles had formed collections of stone and bronze sculpture, textiles, jewellery and miniature paintings, along with more exotic artefacts like howdahs (seat or carriage

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Sculpture of Tara, Patna Museum. Source: Batul Raaj Mehta

positioned on the back of an elephant) and palanquins, some of were the beginning the grand museum collections of today.

On the basis of that heritage alone, one might expect India to be at the centre of some of the most advanced museums in the world, but that is not the case. This can partially be attributed to the relative lack of physical and monetary resources that could be spared for museology. Another factor has been the common perception, despite the large numbers of Indians who visit these museums is that these institutions are essentially for tourists, so improving these has not been on the agenda of social and economic development. As a result, most museums in India lack fundamental requirements for professional operation.

- *Environmental controls:* Even in some of the larger museums, environmental controls cannot provide the constant relative humidity 24 hours per day that is needed for preservation of the organic and ferrous metal collections, especially in India's challenging climate. Textiles, costume and miniature painting collections have particularly suffered.
- *Documentation:* Digitisation of collection documentation is scanty, impeding visible storage, interactive, on-line programmes, that could make images of the collection more widely available, both in the museum and elsewhere.
- *Lighting systems:* Lighting systems are often outdated and inappropriate for the material being displayed. Natural light is far too prevalent, with bright sunlight streaming through windows opened as the only source of a breeze in hot weather.
- *Security systems:* Inadequate security systems present levels of threat. Guards chatting on cell phones lack training, morale and esprit de corps.
- *Staffing:* Museums are under staffed and both professional and support staff are woefully underpaid.

In addition to such basic needs, Indian museums could serve the public better and be more sustainable with such improvements as:

- Community and private sector involvement in governance, as a basis for building civil society institutions that are more than government line departments.
- Enhanced learning programmes delivered by trained educators supplementing the ubiquitous guides available for hire.

Zenana Mahal at the City Palace Museum Udaipur decorated for a wedding. Source: HRH Group of Hotels

- Dedicated galleries and programmes for children.
- Museum quality facilities for shipping, receiving and handling incoming and outgoing exhibitions.
- Improved visitor services like retail stores, coffee houses, parking lots and toilets.
- Multi-purpose spaces for events or rental, supported by catering kitchens and chair and table storage, facilitating an additional source of earned income as well as lecture or film programmes.

CONTEXT FOR MUSEUM PLANNING

Now that the economy is producing sufficient surplus and greater resources can be made available to museums, there is an opportunity for what might be called a 'renaissance' in India's museums, whereby these may begin to realise the promise of great collections and stunning sites. In Rajasthan, for instance, there is a keen interest in museum development because of the importance of cultural tourism. Mehrangarh, the magnificent fort and palace at Jodhpur, has led the way with an excellent audio tour, a first-class conservation lab, lively animation by musicians in costume, high quality retail and good food service. Several museums in India's bigger cities such as Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata and Mumbai have embarked on significant new developments, either within the existing facilities or considering expansions or new buildings. In the state of Bihar, the Buddha Smriti Park has been opened and the intention to build a new museum to celebrate Bihar's contribution to the Indian and Asian civilisation has been declared. These museums are meant to build self-pride among young Biharis. Equally of interest in the private sector, are the moves among some developers to incorporate museums, public galleries or cultural centres as part of commercial or mixed-use residential or commercial complexes. As funding is becoming available for museum development in some parts of India, it is an exciting time to be planning there. Professional museum planning is essential if India's museums are to make the most of the present opportunity and avoid the mistakes that have been made during some museum booms elsewhere. However, there remain many museums that have yet to hear the message or to receive any concrete improvements. Despite the ₹ 50 million grant given for museum upgradation by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, funding remains scarce for the vast majority. But planning is needed whether funds are available or not. Indeed, planning is more necessary than ever when funds are scarce.

The economic justification for museum development may be expressed in relation to at least three rationales: Cultural tourism is the most dynamic sector of tourism, the world's largest industry. Global surveys indicate that on average, cultural tourists are older, better educated, stay longer, are less harmful to the environment and spend more per capita and per day than mass tourism customers. A more long lasting economic advantage to be gained from museum

Musicians greet tourists at the Mehrangarh Fort Museum, Jodhpur. Source: Batul Raaj Mehta

development is a heightened ability to attract and keep knowledge workers; the people at the creative edge of economic development around the world and especially in India, whom economist Richard Florida calls 'the creative class.' Providing a supportive, open, tolerant environment for these workers, especially for the entrepreneurs among them who are starting up new enterprises in response to the opportunities presented by social, environmental, cultural and technological change, is the key to future prosperity for India's cities, states and regions.

A still longer lasting benefit of museum development is to strengthen the appreciation of the nation's cultural identity, especially by India's huge and growing young population. This is a contribution to social stability that is crucially needed, especially in view of the diversity of India's population.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS

Museum planning should be a continual process, not a once in a lifetime event. Nevertheless, it is typically when the museum is faced with a need or an opportunity for new construction, expansion or renovation that it hurriedly seeks to plan. In India, as elsewhere, this often results in the mistaken expectation that architects or exhibition designers can do the planning for us. This is a fallacy: architects know about buildings and designers know about design, but they cannot be expected to understand how a museum functions and what it needs. Museum planning is the responsibility of museum professionals.

Museum directors and curators may groan at the suggestion that they should add planning to their already bulging portfolio of responsibilities. One option is to commission museum planning professionals. Even with such assistance there remains an important role for India's museum professionals to play in the museum planning process. For many institutions planning may have to be done primarily in house.

Many senior museum staff members could effectively lead their organisation through an institutional planning process, with or without the aid of professional museum planners, if the museum's funding authority were willing to provide adequate support, such as:

- Leave of absence from regular duties.
- Support staff for the planning activity.
- Full and unfettered access to records and information.

- A reasonable expense budget for travel and obtaining specialist resource materials or specialist advice, if and when required.

A group that cannot find the funds for outside consultants, seldom finds adequate funds to support its own staff either. A museum management that is unwilling to open the institution to outsiders frequently puts roadblocks in the way of its own staff's research when directed at internal problem solving. The most effective solution is to involve staff at all levels in a planning process led or advised by professional museum planning consultants. A consultant is sufficiently knowledgeable in both museum needs and the building process to plan, set priorities and work with local authorities, architects, engineers, exhibition designers and others to ensure that the final product will meet the needs of its users, both staff and public. They can anticipate and help resolve any conflicts that may arise. Planning consultants must strive to ensure that the museum's needs remain paramount as the basis for cooperation among the architects, engineers, designers and bureaucrats.

THE PROCESS

With a collaborative approach, India's museums could benefit from museum planning of either a broader or a more focused scope for:

- Comprehensive long range planning, which is required when a museum is contemplating a major expansion or renovation or a new policy direction or when some public or private agency is thinking of starting a new museum.
- More focused plans to meet such immediate needs as preserving, documenting or digitising museum collections for a specified period, developing an enhanced visitor services plan or designing an interpretative master plan to improve the museum's displays and the visitor experience of them.

Long range or more immediate, all planning exercises include two main components:

- The process of research, evaluation and concept development which involves both staff and professional museum planners who are working on site at the museum.

Locals visiting the Mehrangarh Fort Museum, Jodhpur. Source: Batul Raaj Mehta

Buddha Smriti Park, Patna, Bihar. Source: Batul Raaj Mehta

- The product, which is a planning document that will be useful to management and staff as a guide to implementation in the months and years after the study is completed. Effective presentation of this product to the museum's governance authority with attractive visual aids is essential to making it effective in the life of the institution.

Master plans for renovations or expansions, strategic planning for the entire institution, feasibility studies for new museums, new wings or new sites and interpretative master planning for an entire site are examples of museum planning that are currently being developed or considered by some Indian museums.

Master plans for renovations or expansions

Many of India's museums would benefit from renovation of their aging facilities that may not have been purpose built in the first place or do not meet the standards of 21st century museums. The need in these circumstances is to establish priorities. A master plan for such a renovation provides the museum's governing authority, its management and staff with a comprehensive review of its goals and functions to meet the long range priorities of the future and not just the immediate needs of the present.

A master plan for a renovation or expansion is likely to include:

- A review of the museum's goals and priorities in discussion with the governing body, management and staff.1 Attention may be needed to consider improvements in display as well as collection stores, enhanced retail and food facilities or a theatre in order to offer more attractive visitor services.
- An analysis of the collections, their categories, classifications, growth rate and long term requirements for conservation, documentation, digitisation and security. As museum professionals, museum planners must often insist on making collections related requirements central to all future development.
- A review of the museum's permanent collection displays, temporary exhibitions, learning programmes, events and activities, research programmes and visitor services and projection

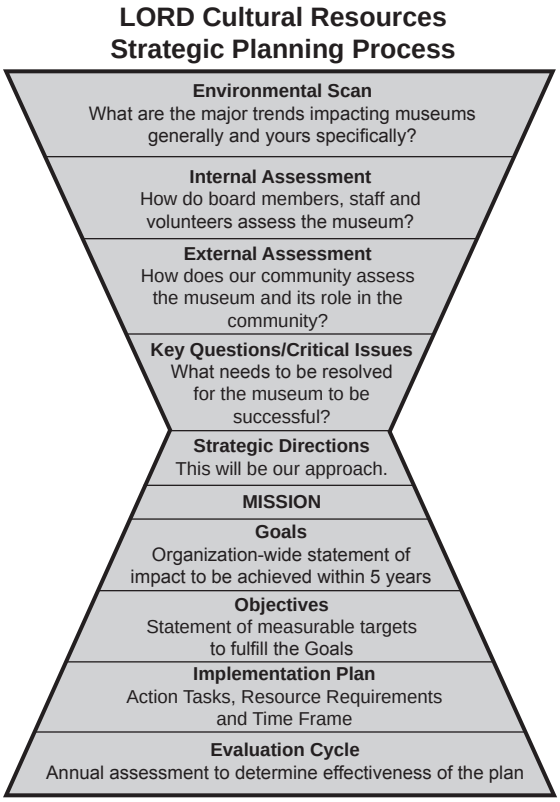
of their long term space and facility requirements. Getting this right may often involve comparison with other 'best practice' examples elsewhere, but must be grounded in demographic analysis of the resident, school and tourist markets that the museum is serving.
- An analysis of the museum's existing and potential resident, school and tourist market.
- A functional programme or brief for the building that describes the space and facilities required to fulfil museum functions at the desired standard or level of service. Such a programme or brief states the requirements for the architect and engineers to fulfil in order to meet the museum's needs and must originate from within the museum profession.
- An analysis of the existing building and its capability for renovation and/or expansion. Since many of India's museums are in heritage structures, it is very likely that a conservation architect will be helpful here, applying the building programme responsibly within the constraints and opportunities afforded by the historic building.
- A recommended building plan, phased or staged in an affordable way. Whether for a heritage building refit or a new structure, this product will be the architect's work developed in collaboration with and based on the museum planner's functional programme or brief.
- An implementation strategy that the museum planner should prepare in consultation with the museum's governance authority. Very often such a strategy may be projected over several phases and many years of development, while at the same time aimed at realising definite milestones within the life of the current government.

Strategic planning

India and its museums are in the forefront of the economic and cultural change sweeping across the world. Museums must retain their traditional values where appropriate, along with being open to adapting new, effective means of fulfilling their mission or inflecting that mission to meet changing needs of their present day public.

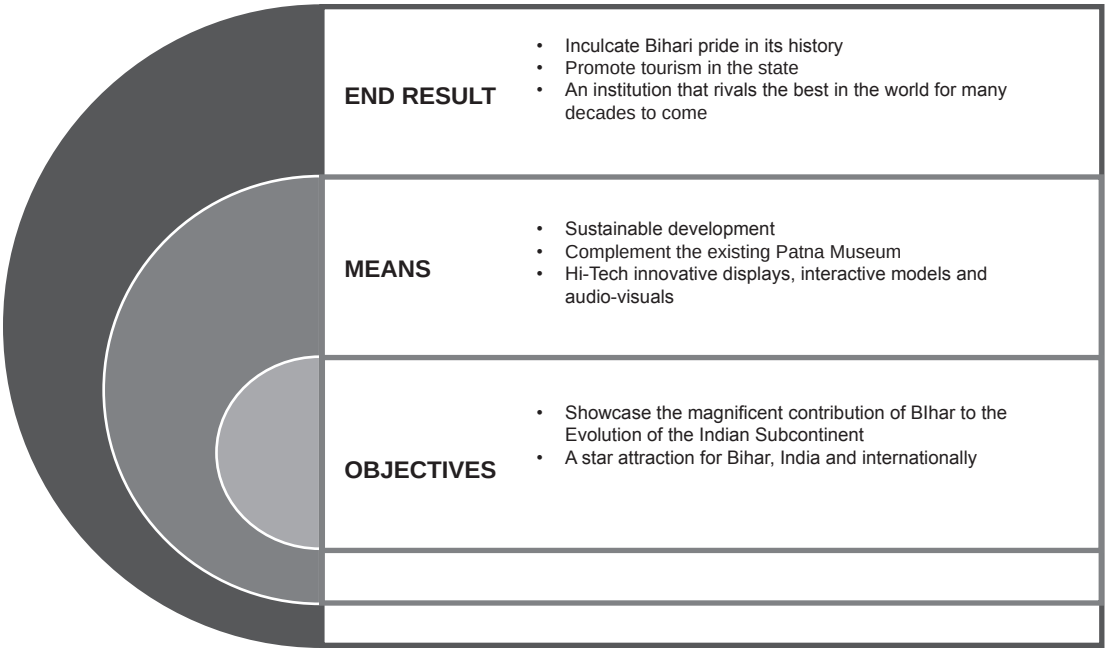
Particularly important for India's museums is to consider what kind of an institution it should be and whether governance changes could help the institution to achieve its mission more completely. Many Indian museums suffer from the difficulties inherent in their status. The museum derives no benefit from its own revenue generating activities and the perception that it is a public institution discourages private sponsorship. Even though salaries and benefits may be low, their annual increase results in budgets where staffing and related costs rise above 60-80%, as the total government financial support of the museum is held constant or even reduced. This leaves sparse resources even for building maintenance and nothing at all for museum programmes. It may be worth considering the addition of an advisory board for the community and private sector representatives to contribute both financially and otherwise to the museum.

Strategic planning is the best way to review all aspects of a museum's policies and operations and provides a blueprint for change that may encompass new management systems, introduction of new technology, expanded public activities, re-design of exhibition galleries and building renovation.



Strategic Planning diagram. Source: Lord & Markert 2007, p. 39

A strategic planning process for museums usually includes:
- A review of the museum's mission and mandate aimed at evolving a new or refreshed vision for the future of the institution.
- A review of the current governance model, exploring options that could involve wider social, academic



The visioning diagram for the proposed museum at Patna © Lord Cultural Resources

and private sector participation, at least in an advisory capacity, potentially stimulating more diverse sources of financial support.

- A scan of internal and external changes that are influencing the museum's ability to carry out its functions or offering opportunities for new directions.
- An assessment of each museum function to determine how it currently responds to these changes, ranging from a review of policies to an inspection of current space use and facilities, staffing levels and annual operating budgets for recent years. Attention must be paid to both actual and potential sources of income, attendance projections and current operating cost allocations.
- An identification of three to five key issues that the governing authority must address to facilitate the museum's progress at this time.
- Recommendations for revisions to the museum's mission, mandate and statement of purpose if required in order to fulfil a new or refreshed vision, with objectives spelled out in relation to each key issue.
- Recommendations for alterations to existing policies and procedures in some or all of the museum's functional areas in order to achieve these objectives.
- Recommendations for a new management structure and staffing plan if needed.
- An implementation plan that staff originates, setting deadlines and itemising tasks to fulfil each objective according to a schedule related to present and future budgets.

A successful strategic planning process can be instrumental in the development of an institution, as it enables governing bodies, management and staff to respond to change in a positive, organised fashion, whether that change is internally or externally generated and to take a more active role in fashioning the museum as a responsible civil society institution.

A strategic plan can be instrumental in responding to long range space and staffing requirements and opening up the potential for new public involvement in support for the institution. As strategic planning considers all museum functions and the context of the community that the museum serves, it can be a prelude to more focused planning such as the master plan for an expansion or a renovation outlined above. Most remarkably, a strategic plan can result in a first ever understanding of the museum's real needs by everyone from the highest authority to the ground staff.

Feasibility studies

A feasibility study advises those who commission it on the viability of establishing a new institution or of expanding an existing museum. The feasibility of profit making ventures ultimately comes down to whether

these will make sufficient profit to justify investment. For non profit cultural institutions like museums, it focuses on whether a new or increased level of government funding is justified by the achievement of the institution's mission or the educational, economic and heritage value of the institution. Every effort should be made to establish or transform an institution so that it is free to maximise other sources of funding from its own revenue generating activities, sponsorships and donations, as well as a certain proportion of government funding in most cases. A well managed museum that is in charge of its own finances and generates its own revenue may be expected to generate about one third of its annual operating budget if the governing authority subsidises the other two thirds, for the cost of maintaining the culture or heritage that the museum is preserving.

A study of this type may include some or all of the following basic components:

- A concept statement that clearly identifies the object of the study or the cultural capital that will be developed by this new institution or expansion.
- A market analysis to identify both local and tourist markets for the venture.
- A community needs assessment to ensure that the new or expanded facility complements rather than competes with other institutions. Joint ventures or participation in 'mixed use' developments can be explored.
- A collection search to identify collecting opportunities for a new museum or an analysis of an existing collection to identify its space needs for display and storage, including the option of visible storage for some parts of the collection.
- A plan for the museum's public activities to meet identified market needs and interests.
- A building programme or brief that describes the space and facilities required to preserve the collections, present the public activities and house all museum functions, including enhanced visitor services.
- An analysis of site or building options for the new museum or expansion of an existing museum. If an historic structure is involved, a sensitive conservation architect may be an important part of the team here, whereas real estate advisors may be more relevant if the plan is for a cultural centre in a new mixed-use private sector development.
- Projection of capital and operating costs.
- Identification of sources of revenue.
- An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed expansion or new facility in light of actual and projected resources.
- A statement of feasibility in terms of justification for the projected level of subsidy required or a recommendation for an alternative solution to the identified needs.
- A recommended course of action including a staffing and administration plan.

Master interpretative plans and exhibition planning

In the professional jargon of museums, 'interpretation' means all the ways in which the museum communicates the meaning of the site or its buildings to the visitor. It ranges from way-finding, learning programmes or audio tours to gallery signage, labels, branding, orientation galleries or theatres and web sites. In museum exhibitions, it implies determination of the museum's communication objectives and mission and its tool of expression. An 'interpretative master plan' is a creative response to what the museum has to offer to optimise the visitor experience.

Interpretative planning determines the resources available to communicate meaning such as collections, real or simulated environments, learning opportunities, interactive devices, audio-visual programmes and so on. Interpretative planning should always precede exhibition design.

An interpretative master plan for an entire museum or an exhibition plan for an individual display is a vital step needed before exhibition design can begin. These normally include:

- Analysis of the museum's resource, that is, the collections, historic site or knowledge that the museum wishes to communicate and the relationship of that resource to the institution's over all mission.
- Analysis of the space and facilities which the museum has or could have at its disposal to communicate its objectives. In some cases, this may mean discovering new uses for some spaces and transforming the functions of others.
- A visioning session with the museum's governing body, professional staff and other stakeholders to explore 'best practice' examples elsewhere, to consider the range of possible means of expression, including alternative technologies and to evolve a shared vision for the future.
- Consultation with an exhibition steering committee that should include museum educators, security staff, retail and other visitor service providers, marketing and financial officers, as well as curators, conservators and registrars.
- Determination of the communication objectives

consonant with the exhibition mission and vision.
- Elaboration of optional means of expression to achieve those communication objectives, with the understanding that for each objective many of these expressive media will not be implemented or may have to be abandoned due to financial, technical, scheduling or material supply reasons, so that it is important to have alternatives in view throughout the design, fabrication and installation process.
- Guidelines for the curatorial research needed to provide or support the content of the exhibition.
- Guidelines for selection of artefacts or works of art for the exhibition, to be developed in consultation with the relevant curators.
- Guidelines and a style book for graphic and oral text for way-finding, signage, labels, audio tours, film scripts, learning programmes, web sites and social media.
- Capital, staffing and operating cost implications.
- An implementation schedule that may be phased over years ahead for a master interpretative plan or may describe a very quick march to the deadline for a new permanent collection display or temporary exhibition.

CONCLUSION

Museums in India now have the opportunity to take a more prominent role in the economy, to take charge of their own finances to the extent possible and to involve the private sector and the general public in their emerging role as civil society institutions. Museum planning must be a vital part of this transformation to avoid building too large or too small or erecting institutions that may not be sustainable. Professional museum planners can be an important aid in this process, but senior museum personnel and museum governance authorities must play an active part. An Advisory Board must be set up to motivate private sector sponsorships or donations. Museums are often thought to be about objects, but these are really about people. Museums are means of communication. Their media are three dimensional objects in three dimensional environments, supported by oral, printed or screened verbal interpretation. With these materials and media, museums communicate meaning about art, history or science. The people whom museums are addressing are not only their visitors today, but also the children and grandchildren of those visitors. Hence, museums must have the resources to research, document and preserve the objects and keep them safe.

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Note

[1] For example, we recently included a photograph of an Indian museum's storage room in a presentation to the museum's governing authority, stimulating them to realise the need to improve not just display but also to improve their collection stores.

Demystifying Documentation

MRINALINI VENKATESWARAN

ABSTRACT

Documentation, a term often used and interpreted with a great deal of gravity and mystery, is simply record-keeping. Keeping records of collections has evolved (some would say, exploded) from simple numbered lists of the contents of showcases into seemingly labyrinthine, convoluted and endlessly categorised and cross-referenced lists of information; the entry and exit of objects, including the various circumstances under which this can take place, such as an acquisition and a loan, their movement control, condition, security, valuation and insurance and many more. Despite this, providing a unique identity to an object remains at the heart of all documentation exercises, and every other detail is just one more layer surrounding this core. This paper attempts to de-mystify documentation for the average collector or administrator. We will consider case studies, best practice, evaluate the applicability of international norms to Indian collections and survey the ongoing evolution of documentation while keeping in mind its most important aspect - end use.

INTRODUCTION

The consensus on what a museum does has come a long way from its earlier specific mandate to collect, preserve and research objects[1]. However, despite a continuously evolving mandate and the occasional

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re-ordering of priorities, museums continue to derive much of their purpose from collections, material or intangible. This paper focuses on material collections, but the general principles discussed below are applicable to other types as well.

Servicing society's needs for 'education, study and enjoyment' (ICOM 2010 a) may be the ultimate aim, but facilitating this becomes possible only if we know something about our collections. Otherwise, a rare albumen self-portrait by a significant 19th century photographer simply becomes a picture of a man in unfamiliar clothing.

It is perhaps ironic, but we discover that a museum's core functions of caring for and creating knowledge about their collections have not changed at all. In India, the early years of keen purpose and prolific engagement have given way to a number of disappointments, despite our museums possessing unparalleled collections. We could try learning from other Asian and African countries that operate in similar socio-political contexts, but while they attempt to reinvent their museums, we find the most low-tech and inexpensive endeavour a challenge because we are yet to put our *ajaibghar*s (houses of wonder)[2] in order.[3] We also have a conjunction of challenges; insufficient numbers of adequately trained staff entering the workforce on the one hand, older staff who are unwilling or unable to re-train and the usual harried professional who like an ant, shoulders a workload well above his or her weight. National financial resources become scarce simply because there are so many to claim them. Smaller museums or collections often have only a one-time budget for a complete documentation exercise, with an all-in-one manager or staff person, or sometimes only the owner available to administer to the day-to-day needs of the collection. A combination of all the above means that a Western model of documentation with dedicated staff (even if just one), budget and complicated software simply does not work here.

DOCUMENTATION

As with many words in the English language, 'documentation' too has a chequered past. It evolved from and is linked with Latin words such as *documentum* (lesson or written evidence), *docere* (to show or teach), via Old French and assorted use in English from the 17th century onwards to arrive at the generally accepted meaning today. The Oxford English Dictionary lists two major definitions. The first combines the evidentiary and instructional aspects and so is listed as 'material that provides official information or evidence or that serves as a record; the written specification and instructions accompanying a product, especially a computer program or hardware'. It is also explained as 'the process of classifying and annotating texts, photographs, etc.'

In the museum world, documentation can be broadly explained as record-keeping. Recording what we own helps both individuals and museums in many ways, for instance, to remember exactly what we have (enabling us to take pleasure in it) and keep track of it; as an owner of objects, a museum documents its collections for many of the same reasons that an individual does.

At heart, it is an accounting and identification exercise. However, the exalted position that museums occupy in our consciousness and their accountability as guardians and custodians of material culture place additional demands on their record-keeping standards. A museum record cannot be a simple list which reads, '1 chair, 2 tables, 5 paintings, 30 glasses' since one of the key requirements of good documentation is identification. One way of ensuring this is by the accessioning process, which covers the formal addition of an object into an institution's collections. Narrowly applied, it is the process of assigning a unique number to an object and associating (usually by marking) the object with it in order to aid identification. The purpose of the exercise also extends beyond simple identification because all further documentation of an object is based on this primary relationship.

BEST PRACTICES, STANDARDS AND THE END USER

Collectors have been around forever; indeed, each of us is a collector in some way and museums as we generally understand them have been around since at least the 17th century in Europe. However, the museum industry has been a free-for-all for a large part of its existence. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) was formed only in 1946 and a Code of Ethics for the profession adopted in 1986 (ICOM 2010 b). The International Committee for Documentation of the International Council of Museums (ICOM-CIDOC) has been around since 1950, but internationally accepted standards for documentation emerged only in 1990s.

Standards are a vital tool to help all practitioners speak the same language and all collections attain a minimum, universally-accepted level of care. The major standards available today and used across

the globe include ICOM-CIDOC's general guidelines, the International Council of African Museums' (AFRICOM) Handbook of Standards[4] (Annabi, Kumetsu & Chieze 1996), SPECTRUM[5] (Dawson & Hillhouse 2011), ObjectID[6] (Dorrell, Lie & Thornes 1999) and the Dublin Core[7] (Boylan 2004). All five standards are freely available online (some in multiple languages) for adaptation and use and some as detailed above are also available as publications.

A cursory glance at a comparative table published by ICOM in its Museum Handbook (Boylan 2004) shows that of the five options, Object ID has the least number of fields or types of information. However, as the premise of Object ID was to ensure interoperability of documentation systems between two institutions and between institutions and law enforcers, it focuses on a minimum set of standardised fields with a specific scope of entry - in other words, the absolute essentials of what an institution 'must' know about its collections. Thus, it is also an accurate pointer to a baseline. Although recording data against every single field recommended by every professional standard (or perhaps even the most comprehensive one), is ideal and desirable, the overarching need for the end-user (for smaller collections, even a single user such as the owner) is often for something simple, that enables them to 'understand', 'operate' and 'use' the documentation.

FUNDAMENTALS

A truly effective record would enable the reader to pick out a single chair from amongst a roomful of furniture, or indeed, a roomful of only chairs. In order to achieve this, the record must include ways of identifying a particular item: what does it look like (using both words and images), how big it is, what it is made of, how it

Recommended catalogue fields and correlation with other guidelines

Field	Core	AFRICOM	CIDOC	MDA	Object ID	Dublin Core
Object Management						
Museum name	X	1.3	X	X		X
Object number	X	1.4	X	X		X
Accession number	X					
Acquisition method	X	1.5	X	X		
Acquisition date	X	1.6	X	X		
Acquisition source	X	1.7	X	X		
Normal location	X	1.8	X	X		
Current location	X		X	X		
Current location date	X		X	X		
Current location reason						
Remover						
Conservation method				X		
Conservation date				X		
Conservator				X		
Conservation reference number				X		
Deaccession/disposal method			X			
Disposal date			X			
Disposal recipient			X			
Object description						
Physical description		2.17	X	X		X
Distinguishing features		2.17			X	
Image reference number		2.1	X	X	X	
Object name/common name	X	2.9/2.10	X	X	X	X
Local name		2.11/2.12				
Title		2.13	X	X	X	X
Classified name		2.8	X	X		X
Category by form or function		2.2			X	
Category by technique		2.3				
Material	X	2.14	X		X	
Technique		2.15	X	X	X	
Dimensions	X	2.16	X	X		
Specimen form		2.4				
Body part		2.5				
Sex		2.6				
Age or phase		2.7				
Content/subject		2.18	X	X	X	
Inscription/mark type			X			
Inscription method			X			
Inscription position			X			
Inscription transcription			X			
Inscription translation			X			
Inscription description		2.19	X		X	
Condition assessment		2.20	X			
Condition date			X			
History						
Historical comm		3.26				
Producer/maker		3.1/3.3	X	X	X	X
Production place		3.2	X	X		X
Production period/date		3.4/3.5	X	X	X	
User		3.8	X	X		
Place of use		3.9	X	X		X
Period/date of use		3.11	X	X		
Collection or excavation place		3.12	X	X		
Site reference/name		3.15		X		
Site co-ordinates		3.13				
Object co-ordinates		3.14				
Site type		3.16				
Age/period of feature		3.17/3.18				
Collector/excavator		3.21/3.22	X	X		
Collection/excavation date		3.23	X	X		
Collection/excavation method		3.24	X			
Collection/excavation number		3.25		X		
Documentation						
Publication reference		4	X	4		X

Source: Boylan 2004, pp. 37-38

might have been made, how old it is, how many pieces constitute it, who made it (this could be an individual, firm, or community), and where it came from (both where it was made and acquired from). Distinguishing features such as inscriptions and makers' marks such as logos and the condition of the object also prove useful in identification.

The last is also relevant for the next important function of documentation, informing us of the physical condition of an object. Preservation, the second important function of a museum, is fulfilled only when it is able to take informed decisions on how to care for its objects. In addition to determining what kind of shelf or cupboard and under what environmental conditions an object is stored in and how frequently and under what conditions its own staff handle it, this information filters down in many other ways, including influencing decisions on whether objects can be made available for research and shared with the public through both in-house exhibitions and loans to other institutions.

Every time an object is handled, the list of potential horrors grows. An album incorrectly supported could crack, one could accidentally drop it or skid over a runaway pencil on the floor while carrying it from storage shelf to examination table. The simple act of using seemingly clean, if slightly sweaty, hands could set off a chain reaction based on the chemicals and bacteria in our sweat, not to mention oil, cream or any other lingering substance. Damage is also cumulative. A photograph may look pristine every time it is removed for examination, but, in reality, it fades ever so slightly every time it is handled. Good documentation can come to the rescue in such an increasingly alarming situation by reducing the number of times an object has to be handled. Accurate descriptions and complete records of every dent and inscription can ensure that an object is pulled out only when needed, and not in response to every casual enquiry. Information on location and storage within the museum are also helpful in this respect as these enable one to navigate to the exact spot where an object can be found, instead of unwrapping every single bathrobe in a collection to trace one with a particular monogram.

By recording location information of each object, we reduce traffic in storage areas, enable targeted spot checks to ensure that things are where they are supposed to be and also enhance security. The entire descriptive section of the record is an indispensable tool to help a museum establish ownership of its collections and retrieve them, especially in connection with stolen objects.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Sophisticated Collections Management Software (CMS), developed in partnership with cultural institutions and developers of industry standards, have infinite capacity for detail and customisability. In their efforts towards standardisation, they contain hierarchical lexicons to help a documentation officer catalogue, cross-reference and describe an object to pinpoint precision. They are however subject to the same pitfalls in an Indian context as discussed in the introduction and can be recommended only to mammoth institutions, assuming the requisite infrastructure and staff resources are available. Pencil and paper remain the backbone of recording and will, at the very minimum, get the job done. Paper especially retains its position as the ultimate record even after thousands of years of technological improvement. While not wishing to advocate its flagrant overuse and waste, it is imperative for one master copy of records to be backed up in the form of printouts, preferably on acid-free paper to ensure its longevity.

Nevertheless, there are significant advantages to digitising or using computers and digital cameras to capture and store information, especially in terms of speed and ease of access, reproduction and uniform presentation. This is also a viable option since any simple spreadsheet software such as Microsoft Excel can be formatted to create individual records for each object. The advantage with using simple software is that these are unlikely to go out of fashion (Excel has been in use since 1985) and are relatively easy to migrate into other standard formats, which is a very real concern in the fickle world of technological development.

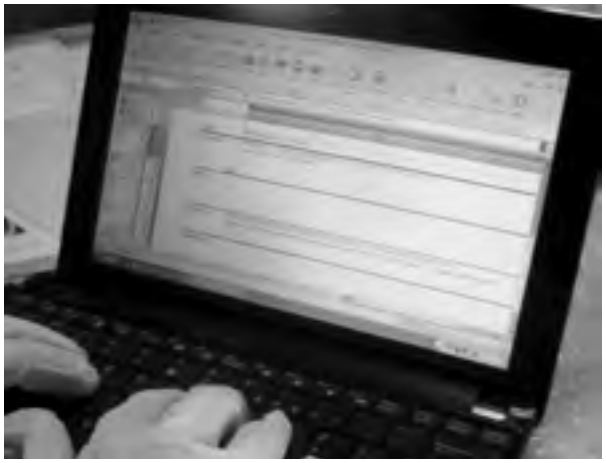
Attention to detail, clarity, brevity, accuracy and above all consistency are also valued tools, perhaps more so in an Indian context where we rely more on people rather than drop-down lexicons to pick the right descriptive term.

CASE STUDIES

Documentation is an ongoing process. This is because our knowledge of most collections is incomplete and there is always scope for additional research and refinement; collectors also continue to add to their collections, necessitating accessioning in tandem. In

The materials for use in the documentation process are quite simple. Always wear gloves; usually cotton, but latex is better if there is any risk of snagging when handling collections. Also ensure you have a clean, uncluttered, lined table to work on

Simple precautions like using two stiff boards to sandwich a painting and then turning it over can help prevent accidents during work



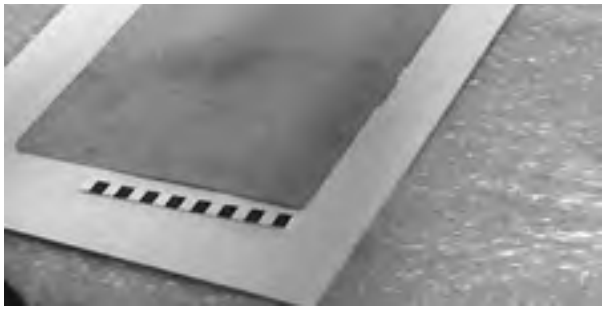
Simple software like MS Excel can be used to capture all your data

Numbering an object with its accession number or unique ID. If this is consistently numbered in the same location for all objects, it will be easily spotted when searching through them

Measuring a flat object

Making notes. It is a good idea to use a pencil around original objects (not too sharp however as they can tear or poke holes) since their markings can be easily erased

Essential to note the condition of an object while documenting since it will help conservators prioritise later



Digital photographs are an easy way to record objects. Ensure even lighting and a clear photograph and place a scale to indicate size

LIST OF ESSENTIAL AND OPTIONAL FIELDS THAT HAVE BEEN USED BY THE AUTHOR ACROSS A RANGE OF COLLECTIONS:

Essential

a. *Serial Number:* Used to keep track of number of records, either in each lot or across the entire collection.
b. *Accession Number:* The unique ID number associated with an object
c. *Number of pieces:* To specify exactly the number of items associated with each unique accession number. For example, a dinner set may be accessioned as one item but may contain 24 separate pieces. Specifying number of pieces helps keep track of quantity.
d. *Title:* Has a descriptive function, but ideally limited to a name, inscribed title or if all else fails, a single descriptive sentence.
e. *Maker:* Information on who created the object. Could be an individual, a firm, or a community.
f. Material or Medium & Technique: Records the composition of the object and the method of making.
g. *Description:* For most objects, can be divided into Recto (front) and Verso (back). Should be a detailed description, but which focuses on identification rather than being an appraisal. Should also ideally note distinguishing features, including the location of inscriptions. Contents of inscriptions can also be recorded here, but for ease of reading may be placed in a field immediately below or adjacent to this.
h. *Dimensions:* Part of the physical description of an object but of particular significance. Measurements are taken in centimetres and if approximate should be mentioned as such. The standard format is Height x Width (H x W) for two-dimensional objects, H x W x Depth for three dimensional. Can include weight, and can be expanded to include multiple measurements for special collections such as textiles. Must however always include the maximum dimensions.
i. *Period:* When was the object created? If approximate should be mentioned as such.
j. *Provenance:* Origin of the object. Can denote either place of acquisition, manufacture &/or use. In case all three types of information are available, advisable to record all three (unless source and place of use are the same).
k. *Location:* Current location of object, ideally with a provision for recording a change to location.
l. Inscriptions: Marks on the object like writing, stamps, labels, stickers, engravings, paint, monograms, cartouches and inscriptions.
m. *Condition:* A note on the object's condition as observed during documentation. It is essential for any later decisions regarding conservation or exhibition of the object. The report will help to record the extent of damage caused over a period of time when examined repeatedly in future. It also helps determine what to retain in the Museum. The condition report can use a five-point scale ranging from unacceptable, poor, fair, good, to excellent.
n. *Date:* Date of documentation; helps pinpoint condition and description in time.
o. *Documented by:* Name of person (s) responsible for documentation; useful for accountability.

Optional

a. *Other number:* Number assigned by earlier inventories; helps trace object's movement through a collection.
b. *Published references:* Records every instance when an object has been published/ exposed to the public, whether in the media, or through exhibitions and books/publications.
c. *Access or use restrictions:* Relevant in case of highly sensitive material (either contents or condition).
d. *Action note:* Useful for recording significant changes to the record; based on good faith and does not preclude the need to ensure authorised access to data.
e. *Keywords:* Once documentation is complete, keywords can help the database be more user-friendly and searchable by cross-referencing thematically or otherwise linked records.
f. *Insurance valuation:* Should include date of assessment and details of assessor.[8]

practice however, most Indian collections (with the possible exclusion of the national museums) undertake a thorough documentation exercise only once. All subsequent inputs are modifications or additions that build upon a base or foundation of information.

In the course of work with numerous private collections across India, the fundamentals discussed previously have been maintained. However, a thorough understanding of the kind of data one is trying to generate allows one to make small, practical, and beneficial changes. For instance, at the Pictorial Archives of the Maharanas of Mewar in the City Palace Museum, Udaipur[9], it is an impossible task to try and record the source for the photographic collections since these were commissioned and acquired by, gifted and later added to by the Maharanas of Mewar, their families, their court and visitors over a period of 150 years. Most of the details of this process remain conjecture at this time and so it seemed prudent to avoid using a specific 'source' field on the one hand and limit the 'provenance' field[10] to record which location of the Palace objects came from to the archive.

The opposite is true with Weavers' Studio's collection of vintage textiles at Kolkata, where the source information on the acquisition was available, as well as two additional types of provenance, that is, the place of manufacture, as well as the place of use (in some cases the same as the source of acquisition). In this case, an additional field was introduced to record all three types of information.

In another situation, the field 'dimension' which is used to record the height, width and depth of three dimensional objects such as furniture, is necessarily restricted to two dimensions when dealing with flat objects such as works of art on paper. When working with precious metals it can be expanded to include weight and when costumes and textiles are on the agenda as was the case at the Udai Bilas Palace in Dungarpur, it needs to be stretched to include multiple factors (sometimes including depth) that account for every possible measurement ranging from sleeve length to ankle width.

CONCLUSION

The essentials of documentation are simple, and with a little training, most objects of material heritage can be recorded. Just as museums have thrown their doors open to visitors from all walks of life and seek to actively engage with them, there is a growing recognition in the Indian museum community that the recording of collections must be a more democratic process. So, the expert engaged in recording must ensure the end usability by the average museum officer or small collections owner. The National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA) has an ambitious plan to allow anyone in possession of an antiquity to download a documentation form from its website and upload the completed form thereby creating a national database accessible via the internet.[11] Although tailored to antiquities and monuments, the format and fields used adhere closely to the essentials discussed here.

While museum records need to be short and simple keeping in mind the ease of access for the end user, nevertheless the importance of the full range of information and comprehensive documentation cannot be undermined. Since documentation is a one-time exercise for most museums, it is vital that the exercise be a thorough one, so that it minimises repeated handling of fragile collections.

Acknowledgements

- All images are from the Pictorial Archives of the Maharanas of Mewar, MMCF, Udaipur.

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Notes

1 The International Council of Museums (ICOM), considered the industry-standard defines it thus:
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 2010 a).

2 The local, or at least north Indian term for a

museum. It is often referred to with negative connotations by museum professionals as an indication of mere spectatorship and of an absence of engagement on the part of the museum visitor. However, it is used in this context in a literal sense, for museums are indeed houses of wonder in terms of the extraordinary objects (whether a nondescript stone tool or a spectacular jewelled object) they contain, and our opportunity to work with them a true privilege.

[3] This emerged at a conference conducted in Mumbai, India by the Commonwealth Association of Museums in June 2010. The theme was 'Rethinking Museums' and was intended to provide a platform for professionals to ideate on the evolving needs of museums in India in the 21st century and on the larger role of museums in society. Most discussions however returned to the twin topics of the need for better documentation and training. The author was a participant.

[4] Developed by ICOM and the AFRICOM Co-ordinating Committee for use by museums throughout Africa, based closely on general guidelines developed by ICOM-CIDOC.

[5] Principally developed by the Museum Documentation Association (MDA) of the United Kingdom (re-launched in April 2008 as The Collections Trust), revised and re-issued four times since its initial publication in 1994, translated into other languages and increasingly used across Europe and in various international locations.

[6] ObjectID was initiated by the J Paul Getty Foundation and jointly developed with several stakeholders including the MDA, cultural agencies, museums, as well as law enforcement agencies. The premise of this project was to ensure interoperability between documentation systems both between institutions, and between institutions and law enforcers. This took the form of a minimum set of standardised fields with a specific scope of entry.

[7] Aimed at facilitating retrieval of information resources on the internet.

[8] For a more detailed overview of the scope of each field, refer to Dorrell, Lie & Thornes (1999) and Dawson & Hillhouse (2011) on which these are based.

[9] Managed by the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation (MMCF).

[10] Traditionally used to denote the origin of an object but without delineating the various nuances that the word 'origin' has – for instance, the place of manufacture as well as acquisition could both justifiably be recorded as 'provenance' and indeed, this particular field often does double-duty for both types of information.

[11] The website and forms of the NMMA are not yet publicly accessible. A brief introduction to the Mission and its Mandate are available on the Archaeological Survey of India's website: <http://asi.nic.in>.

Retailing Cultural Merchandise

MAUREEN LIEBL

ABSTRACT

It has been widely acknowledged that the economic sector known as 'cultural industries' is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors in Europe and North America and museum shops have played an active role in this growth. In a time when economic recession and increasing demands make funding from traditional sources more and more tenuous, institutional self-sufficiency, to which museum shops can contribute, becomes ever more attractive. However, the potential offered by museum shops and indeed by cultural industries in general, has barely been recognised in India. Some of the possible reasons for this, have been explored and a case study of one successful venture, the Mehrangarh Museum Shop in Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur, has been presented, discussing the various factors that have gone into developing and operating this project.

THE BACKGROUND

It has been widely acknowledged that the economic sector known as 'cultural industries'[1] is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors in Europe and North America (Shaeffer 2005). Museum shops have played an active role in this growth, according to the most recent industry analysis by the Museum Store Association (2009). More than half of the

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New upper section of Museum Shop. Small enclosure at rear was restored by the Fort's conservation department during the expansion, with walls being carefully stripped of many layers of whitewash and paint, to expose the glowing original lime plaster finish

respondents reported annual sales of over $ 200,000, (approximately ₹ 10 million), while 30% reported sales of over $ 200,000 (approximately ₹ 22 million).

In a time when economic recession and increasing demands make funding from traditional sources such as governments, corporations and private patrons more and more tenuous, institutional self-sufficiency, to which museum shops can contribute, becomes ever more attractive.

The potential offered by museum shops and indeed by cultural industries in general, has barely been recognised in India. In 2005, UNESCO organised an 'Expert Symposium' in India, to explore the reasons for the relatively slow growth of cultural industries in the Asia-Pacific region.[4] One problem is the lack of understanding on the part of policy makers. In the case of museum shops, there may be more subtle forces at work that are discussed later in this article.

The UNESCO symposium was held in Nagaur, Rajasthan, just outside Jodhpur. This was the logical venue for such a conclave, since Jodhpur is a city that exists on its cultural industries (Liebl 2005). It is thus perhaps equally logical that Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort was the first major museum in India to experiment with the concept of a museum shop. Despite the challenges, the venture can be judged a success. The way in which this has been achieved is described below.

THE SETTING

Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur is a massive stone fortress that served as the hereditary home of successive Rathore Rajput rulers of Jodhpur/Marwar from the mid-15th until the mid-20th century. In the early 1970s, when the young Maharaja Gaj Singh, known as 'Bapji', returned to Jodhpur after his education abroad, the privy purses of the former ruling families had just been withdrawn. Despite the resulting financial difficulties, Bapji was determined that the collections of Jodhpur/Marwar should not only remain in place, but should become accessible to the public. Hence, he formed the Mehrangarh Museum Trust (MMT) in 1972 and shortly thereafter began the process of developing a world class museum within Mehrangarh Fort.

Without the privy purse, there was little income to support such an ambitious dream. The Fort, however,

One section of lower portion of Museum Shop. During the first renovation in 2004, the walls and floors were stripped down to their original surfaces and restored where necessary. Minimal display fixtures were then 'floated' through the space

was extremely rich in one particular resource: bats. In the early years the venture was supported by income from the sale of droppings (used for fertilizer) of these Fort residents.

By the mid-1990s, the Museum was receiving nearly half a million visitors each year. The active temples in the Fort remained centres of pilgrimage and a growing programme of exhibitions, craft bazaars, performances and other events had made the Fort a truly living museum. In addition, in the early 1990s, the MMT took on the restoration of the 12th century Ahhichatragarh Fort in Nagaur. It was clear that the funding needs would continue to grow and that stable revenue streams would need to be developed to insure long term viability and sustainability.

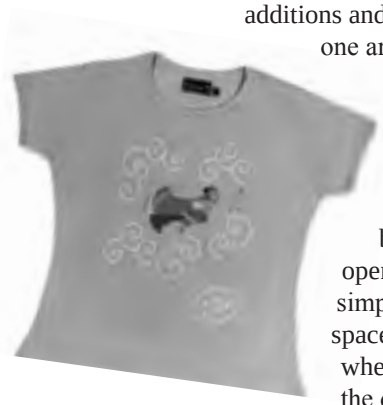
Discussions on how to accomplish this led to the idea of a museum shop. In addition to the income that could be earned, it was realised that a museum shop in the Fort could enable visitors to take home a tangible memory of their experience within the Fort. Moreover, if successful, this could serve as a model for other cultural institutions within India. The shop was established in 1998 as a project of the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, with the encouragement and support of the MMT Trustees, including Bapji and his family and the professional staff of the Fort. Development of concept and products, as well as supervision of management and operations, was entrusted to a small company formed by an India-resident American, with experience in museums throughout Asia as well as with projects in Jodhpur. Immediately after it was established, the Mehrangarh Museum Shop became the only accredited Indian member of the international Museum Store Association and pledged to adhere strictly to all international norms and standards.

THE SPACE

The Museum Shop began on a literal shoestring, as the MMT Trustees were not willing to gamble more than a token amount of the Trust's precious financial resources on this novel experiment. The space allotted to the shop was in disrepair and empty. Without funds for interior work, all that could be done was to scrub the walls and floors and comb the Fort storerooms for old cabinets that could serve as display fixtures. The Fort carpenters stretched inexpensive fabric over thin wood frames to cover the badly-damaged walls and

19th century painting of Mehrangarh Fort; an idealised artist's version of the reality, it conveys the romance of the Fort and is a very popular image on products

huge old 'jail' *durrie*s (rugs) found rolled in the back of one storeroom were used to cover the rough floors. Signs and tags were churned out on home computers and hundreds of resident bats were unceremoniously turned out of what they seemed to consider their ancestral home. Even with these very rudimentary efforts, the shop had a certain charm and was not overly incongruous within the rugged stone walls of the Fort.



Tee-shirt with image from the painting 'Jallandharnath and Princess Padmini Flying (1830)', from the exhibition 'Garden & Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur'

The Museum Shop was an immediate hit with Fort visitors and returned a profit, albeit a very small one, in the very first year. By 2004, six years after opening, the shop had achieved enough financial stability to allow for complete renovation and redesigning of the space. The firm that was selected understood the challenges of working in this very special space. Their proposal was that the walls and floors should be stripped down to the original architectural elements (hidden under many layers of whitewash and paint) and broken up by partitions and that simple metal and glass fixtures would then be 'floated' through the space. The concept was good, but the actual process of creating a modern retail space within a historic stone Fort presented many unforeseen challenges.

All renovation work within the Fort is done with the approval and under the supervision of a senior conservation architect. In a collaborative effort, innovative solutions were found for several sticky problems. For instance, two arched doorways had been boxed in at some point in time and there was concern that opening these might destabilise the floors above. The solution was to insert metal railway girders above to take the load, thus allowing two very beautiful archways to be uncovered. When the work was finished, the space had been transformed into a strikingly contemporary retail shop that did, indeed, 'float' through its restored historic space.

Further expansion was sanctioned in 2010 and an upper level that formerly housed administrative offices was given to the Museum Shop, more than doubling the space. The same design firm was again commissioned to take on the project and it became a real example of 'retail restoration'. Again, partitions, unsightly late additions and many layers of paint were removed. In one area, the Fort's conservation professionals painstakingly removed whitewash, inch by inch, from lustrous lime plaster walls. There were surprises such as the re-emergence of an exquisite small carved balcony that had been covered by a partition wall. Again, the space was opened, arches were uncovered and very simple display fixtures floated through the space. However, in the small alcove area where the lime plaster had been uncovered, the delicately fluted columns did not seem to welcome the minimalist display designs.

Playing cards based on the painting 'Maharaja Takhat Singh Celebrating Diwali (c. 1850)', in box with image of the Fort mascot, the cheel

Set of ten postcards in folio set, images from paintings in the exhibition 'Garden & Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur' that toured to the US, UK and Australia 2008-2010

In this instance, Bapji came to the rescue, suggesting that the design of one old cabinet in the museum, with a curved glass top, would work. The design team agreed to the idea and the resulting fixtures now blend perfectly into the space.

THE PRODUCTS[3]

Three basic decisions regarding products were made at the outset:

- All products would in some way relate to the Fort, its collections, or the history of Jodhpur, Rajasthan, or India.
- All products would be made in India.
- All products would be constructed of the finest materials and be of excellent quality.

These guidelines led to tremendous difficulty in sourcing. Since Jodhpur is a major handicraft export centre, all tourists are bundled off by their guides to local emporia. Moreover, the Fort also has a Crafts Bazaar. It was thus apparent that local handicrafts would not suffice for a Museum Shop.

The manufacture of typical museum shop products such as tee-shirts, tote bags and mugs of the desired quality was almost entirely limited to 'export' firms and few of them were willing to deal with an India based venture. Those who cautiously agreed to enter into discussion invariably wanted orders commensurate with their export customers such as a thousand tee-shirts, five thousand mugs and ten thousand sets of playing cards. When it was explained that the initial

Silk 'Peacocks' necktie with image from the painting 'Ram and Lakshman Wait Out the Monsoon (c.1775)', in the 'Garden & Cosmos' exhibition

Children's tee-shirt with image from the painting 'Monkeys and Bears in the Kishkindha Forest (1532-1623)', from the 'Garden & Cosmos' exhibition

Children's cap coordinating with 'Kishkinda Forest' tee-shirt

Tote bag with 'Trees' image inspired by paintings in the 'Garden & Cosmos' exhibition

order might be for a hundred of each, most doors were quickly slammed. However, through persistent efforts, a very small number of vendors were found who were intrigued by the concept and were willing to take a gamble. They have been rewarded for their vision, as orders now routinely reach into the thousands and priority is always given to those who were willing to help in the beginning. As the type of products offered in the shop differed greatly from the souvenir and handicraft mixture prevalent in other shops, the Museum Shop was not seen as being in competition with local merchants and because of the special relationship local shopkeepers share with tour guides, the Museum Shop was not seen as being a threat to local merchants.

Since funds were so limited, most early products were sourced, rather than developed. Friends and colleagues who produced or sold appropriate products generously agreed to supply early orders on consignment, which enabled a quick turnover. In terms of product development, the first 'exclusive' product was a tee-shirt with an image of the Fort. The bare outline of the Fort, when placed on a shirt, was not especially attractive, so a romantic image from a 19th century painting was adopted instead. One of the early vendor

partners had the idea of affixing an old looking postmark over the painting and an 'iconic' image was born. It has since been used on numerous products and remains immensely popular.

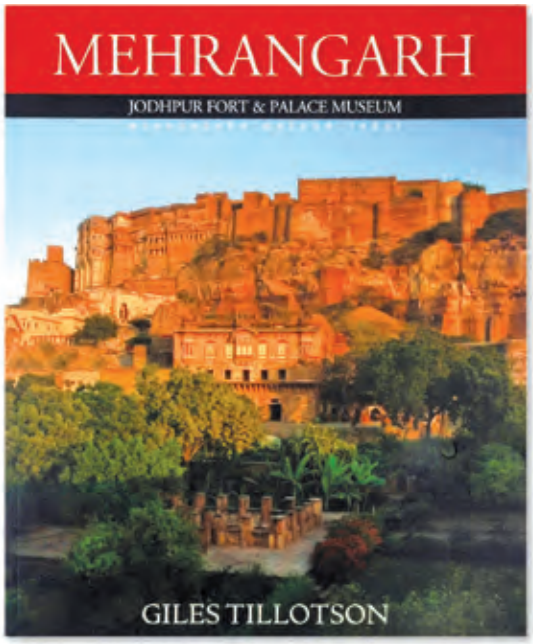
As income from sales poured in, it was ploughed back into product development. Since the mascot of the Fort, the *cheel* (pariah kite) has strong local symbolic importance, its image has been used on myriad products. Slowly, products based on museum paintings and other objects and on local life and activities have been added.

In product development, the effort is to combine image and product in some meaningful way. For instance, a painting of a 19th century maharaja celebrating Diwali was used to illustrate playing cards because of the fondness for card playing in Diwali celebrations. Images are used creatively and often with a touch of humour. The image of a dagger from the museum collections adorns a tee-shirt with the tag line 'Jodhpur on the Edge'. An image of a princess flying over a palace, from a painting that toured in an international exhibition, has the embroidered comment 'free flight'. Products like these, using museum images with a light touch, have proven immensely popular.

From 2008 to 2010 an exhibition of unique paintings from the Jodhpur collections, titled 'Garden & Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur', toured to several major international museums. Products developed from images in these paintings were exported to the shops of all the museums involved. New products have been added since and the entire 'Garden & Cosmos' line now includes tote bags, diaries, paperweights, adult and children's tee-shirts, silk neckties and various stationery products. In a more contemporary vein, the Jodhpur Polo Team, captained by Yuvraj Shivraj Singh, provides an ever popular source of products and Museum Shop reproductions of the Jodhpur team shirts are now spotted around the world. A lively and colourful painting in the collections from 1830, showing Maharaja Man Singh playing Polo, has inspired numerous products and also places Jodhpur polo in its historical context.

A young design team known for their playful use of traditional images is also currently working on a line

Papier-mâché tray created by master artist in Kashmir, copying the painting 'Maharaja Man Singh Playing Polo (1830)'



'Mehrangarh: Jodhpur Fort & Palace Museum', a comprehensive guide to the Fort and its collections, by the scholar Giles Tillotson, published by the Mehrangarh Museum Trust in 2010

of contemporary products using images from the Fort and its collections. After all, the intent of the Trust was to make the Fort a living monument. This magnificent structure inspired countless artists in the past; there is no reason why it cannot do the same in a contemporary context and the Museum Shop is part of this overall effort. The Trust has also published a number of books relevant to the collections. This is a growing activity that will expand in the future. Numerous products are also sourced, but all relate in some way to the 'museum shop' ethos. Reproductions of traditional

Charm bracelet and six charms, representing classic Jodhpur images, crafted of sterling silver, pearls and zircons

Gift bag of the Mehrangarh Museum Shop

Indian wedding jewellery are extremely popular, as are such things as Indian tea, items made from traditional materials such as blue pottery and textiles of all kinds.

MERCHANDISE PLANNING AND PRODUCTION

Products are conceptualised in-house and design and production are commissioned from appropriate designers and manufacturers. The company that manages and directs the shop is responsible for product conceptualisation, development and sourcing, but clears all new concepts and designs with the Museum Director. Inventory planning requires constant scouting of domestic and international markets, attendance at numerous trade fairs and scanning a large number of fashion, lifestyle and home décor publications. The two partners who run the company travel frequently and always keep an eye open for local shops and products. The Museum Shop is also a member of the Museum Store Association, which provides a great deal of resource material on current trends and products. Planning and conceptualisation, however, require continuous research and awareness.

Museum shop merchandise by its very nature depends on an element of creative design and this, of course, can be copied. In the beginning, there were not sufficient resources to copyright or enforce copyright. However, it was felt that the Museum Shop products were of a quality that would be difficult for any local vendor to duplicate. For the most part, this has proven to be the case. But, now that the products are being exported to international markets, exclusive products are being legally protected.

REVENUE

The lack of any precedent in India made it impossible to predict initial results with any accuracy and the business models shared by colleagues in the US and Europe did not seem relevant. However, the general goal was a proportion of 40% cost of goods, 40% administrative and operational costs and 20% net profit for the Trust. Cost of goods was high in the beginning, as most products were purchased from secondary sources. As the Shop moved more and more into product development and was able to find and engage primary producers, the cost of goods decreased and profit margins proportionately increased. Today, the Shop supports a salaried staff of 25, enjoys substantial sales and returns a very healthy income to the Trust. Over the last 10 years, sales have increased by an average of 52% each year. Fort visitorship during the same period increased at an average rate of only 7.4% annually, so shop revenue increase cannot be attributed solely to greater number of visitors. A website is in preparation and online commerce will begin shortly.

THE MODEL

Mehrangarh Fort currently receives close to one million visitors annually, not all of whom can afford the types of products that are sold in the main Museum Shop. Just next to the shop, however, is the Fort's Crafts Bazaar, where a constantly rotating group of traditional crafts persons demonstrate their skills and independently sell their products. A few steps further on is a small 'Pilgrimage Shop,' also run by the Museum Shop, offering very modestly priced articles that appeal to the many thousands of visitors to the temples within the Fort. Proceeds of this shop go to a religious trust.

In short, the Museum Shop, with its affiliated Crafts Bazaar and Pilgrim Shop, offers products at all price ranges and provides all visitors with the opportunity to take home a reminder of their experience. The quality of both products and experience can perhaps be observed by the Museum Shop's mention in the Time magazine's 2007 'Best of Asia' issue, in which it was compared favourably to the shop in a major New York City museum.

An important goal of the Museum Shop project was to serve as a model for other cultural institutions in India. To a limited extent, that has happened. The shop director often gives presentations at museum workshops and meetings in India and provides detailed information and assistance to many others in the museum community. The concept has begun to catch on slowly and there are now shops in a few other Indian museums, though they do not approach the scale of the Jodhpur model.

Certainly, the museum shop concept has potential that is little recognised in India. The Mehrangarh Museum Shop has the advantage of being situated in a monument that attracts large numbers of visitors; but on the other hand, the Fort is a huge structure and the financial needs are great. To make any significant contribution, a shop in such a situation must attract business at a certain level. Even in much smaller museums with modest number of visitors, however, a museum shop can be effective. A simple product line, consisting of postcards of several museum objects, a tee-shirt with an image of the museum or of a very popular object in the collections, a matching cap, a tote bag, can all be produced inexpensively and will also sell well.

There would seem to be several other reasons for the slow appreciation of the museum shop concept and the potential of all cultural commerce activities, within India. Two of the main ones are:

- Government museums cannot use earned income from commercial activities within the institution. Rather, it is returned to a central 'pot'.
- Most museums in India are government institutions or under the patronage of one individual or group and thus have not felt the need for outside funding.

In addition, the establishment and successful operation of a museum shop requires a combination of skills and sensibilities. Creativity in conception and some museum sensibility must be combined with commercial skill and with the ability to work in tandem with curatorial professionals. In many other parts of the world, the running of museum shops is regarded as a profession, with appropriate training and much professional communication. No such opportunities exist in India at present.

A more subtle reason for the late entry of the museum shop concept in India might be the nature of museum patronage. In the United States, for instance, the first museum shop was that of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, where replicas of museum objects and some publications were on sale from the late 19th century. The Trustees and founders of the Metropolitan Museum, as of most other American cultural institutions, were usually self-made millionaires, who could easily grasp the relevance of commerce to the museums they were

developing. In India, on the other hand, most museums were the creation of governments and supported by the authorities. The thought that 'business' might have a place in the institution would not, perhaps, have come easily. In today's world, patronage from any source cannot be taken for granted. Museum shops offer an effective opportunity for self-reliance. If done well, these also offer an extension of the museum experience to visitors and can help to enhance the museum's image with the greater public.

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Notes

1. Alternatively, 'creative industries' or 'cultural commerce'.
2. Under the joint sponsorship of UNESCO, the Mehrangarh Museum Trust and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage.
3. All images and products are copyright, Mehrangarh Museum Trust.

Heritage Orphanages
Site Museums

AMITA BAIG

ABSTRACT

The Archaeological Survey of India's site museums are pitifully few and woefully inadequate. Each sculpture, work of art or fragment is a key to a much broader knowledge and understanding of our heritage. The site museums need to make the quantum shift from being storerooms and safe-houses to becoming centres of learning. We are enormously proud of our 5000 years of continuous civilisation but we are remarkably defensive about the manner in which we present these, especially in museums. Museums must become centres of high learning and research. Today every nation in the world has a dynamic approach to developing museums as destinations, where the breadth and range of its heritage is not merely showcased but also explored and understood. We are a young nation at the cusp of change; understanding and valorising the cultural heritage must be a building block for the future.

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INTRODUCTION

A quantum change in how we view our museums took place post World War II, as nations struggled to recover from loss, deprivation and national shame. For many of these countries, a major exercise in building blocks

was a strategic vision for valorising culture to heal and restore. Also, the emergence of new nations necessitated new roadmaps for cultural validation and museums became the symbol. The Guggenheim in New York was an early icon and later it reinvented public space in Bilbao. The glass pyramid at the Louvre in Paris pushed the boundaries of architectural and aesthetic acceptability and today is Paris' most famous site. Museum buildings themselves have become symbols of contemporary culture. Qatar's Museum of Islamic Art is designed to be the nations' cultural asset and its architecture rich with symbology of an emerging West Asian paradigm.

Indian museums were a colonial creation and a well meaning one. The British collected the remains of built heritage strewn across the land and housed those that weren't shipped 'home' to be showcased as the Empire's possessions, in these museums. In India, we have a truly half hearted approach to museums, perhaps because they are antithetical to our belief in the impermanence of all things. However, we do need to revisit this. Our museums are repositories of extraordinary individual and collective pieces of our history and we need to put in place all the key pieces of a jigsaw to understand our past and fashion our identity.

SITE MUSEUMS: A GLIMPSE

To me, one of the most magical moments in a museum is seeing a great work of art for the first time, something one has learnt about in school, in college or through art books. Seeing the Ashokan Lions in all their glory was a seminal moment. It is familiar to all, but in real life it is much larger than one imagines from the rupee notes. Sculpted out of the most luminous and wonderfully dappled Chunar stone, it is housed at the site museum in Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, in an unpretentious stone clad colonial building, not too far away from the archaeological site where Buddha delivered his first sermon. Given their symbology in modern India, the Ashokan Lions have pride of place in the museum. It is, however, displayed rather sadly on an unremarkable platform surrounded by a picket fence and a couple of flower pots. As a symbol of free and independent India, it stands in a rather dismal domain.

At the other end of the spectrum is an almost unknown site museum in Ropar, Punjab. Facing the entrance is the most used section of the building, the public toilets. Inside, there is a large hall with the ubiquitous style statement of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI): laminated showcases, circa 1960, line the walls and house some of India's most recent and important archaeological discoveries from Sanghol. The objects are unique and would, if anyone knew about it, provide immense resource material for scholars of ancient Indian history. The labels unfortunately do not reflect any level of scholarship, baldly stating: 'vessel approx 3rd century BC'. One such vessel was completely covered in fungus and we inquired about its state of preservation and a possible cure. We were assured that it had been reported to the appropriate department six months ago. They expected it to be inspected within the financial year. The real treasure lies beyond this dark and musty display gallery. The affable and hospitable official invites us to view his exhibition on Punjabi culture, the story portrayed in a few cheerful showcases. However, in the inner sanctum lies the museum's pride and joy: a huge flat screen television, ensuring optimal viewing for the ongoing cricket match. 'How lucky you are to have this', I exclaimed, only to be assured that it was actually the master screen for closed circuit television that monitored the movement of people inside the museum. The fact that perhaps no more than a handful of people visited the museum, was irrelevant.

EXISTING IN A TIME WARP

The ASI, custodians of India's monuments and sites are also custodians of about 40 site museums across the country. The earliest necessity to house objects of antiquarian remains; dates back to late 1796 AD when the Asiatic Society of Bengal felt the need to house the enormous collection of archaeological, ethnological, geological and zoological pursuits. However, the first museum by them was started in 1814. The nucleus of this Asiatic Society Museum later provided to the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Due to the various explorative investigations that were initiated by ASI since the times of its first Director General, Alexander Cunningham, vast quantities of antiquarian remains were collected. The creation of site museums had to wait until the arrival of Sir John Marshall, who initiated the founding of the local museums like Sarnath in 1904, Agra in 1906, Ajmer in 1908, Delhi Fort in 1909, Bijapur in 1912, Nalanda in 1917 and Sanchi in 1919. The concept of site museums is well elucidated by Hargreaves, one of the former Director Generals of ASI:

> it has been the policy of the Government of India to keep the small and movable antiquities, recovered from the ancient sites, in close association with the remains to which they belong, so that they may be studied amid

China is establishing benchmarks in museums as seen in the Shanghai Museum

their natural surroundings and not lose focus by being transported.

A separate Museums Branch in ASI was created in 1946 by Mortimer Wheeler. After the independence, there was a spurt in the growth of site museums in ASI, leading to the present number of 41 site museums. In the 150 years of the ASI's existence, the site museums remain frozen in concept, space and time; mere *bhandar*s (stores) with priceless artefacts, stolen from history and imprisoned in a glass box. Few have any substantial information and even fewer reveal any curatorial skills. Each object in a site museum relates and connects to the larger site context. Today, there are innumerable ways of showcasing how these may have been in their original location and what was their role in the history of India. Each piece is part of a larger narrative and with the history of a site properly explained, the site museums could come alive and resonate with stories of plunder or war and present a nuanced portrayal of India's history and diversity. Our generation has fallen woefully short of protecting and presenting our heritage as it deserves, so that it can be valorised and comprehended by every citizen of India.

THE TAJ MAHAL

The Taj Mahal is India's most visited site and often described as the worst visitor experience in the country. The monument of love is such an overwhelming visual and sensory experience that a museum would inevitably pale into insignificance. A museum located in the presence or even in the shadow of a building of such significance would need perhaps to pay tribute to India's most iconic monument that has been central to our culture through centuries. Therefore, it begs to ask the question: If the museums at the Taj Mahal were to tell a story, what would they say?

Today, its prized possessions are an 18th century map of the site and a 19th century original Daniel painting of the Taj, faded beyond recovery and still exposed to a direct shaft of sunlight. These along with a few other pieces of dubious distinction are housed in the Naubat Khana, on either side of the mausoleum complex and visited by few. It was established well over 100 years ago and its presentation has remained much the same. A museum at the Taj Mahal should showcase the influence of Central Asian cultures on India's architecture and cultural traditions. It must include a narrative of how the Mughal Empire expanded its geographical boundaries to define much of the country as we know it is today. The museum ought to tell the story of the Mughal Empire at its zenith when the Taj Mahal was built, its history and equally, it must speak of the great love the Emperor had for his wife and his great architectural ambitions that culminated in her mausoleum. We need to tell the story of the tragic end to his life, imprisoned and dethroned and not the least, his undignified last journey from the Fort to the Taj Mahal, to be interred alongside his beloved Mumtaz Mahal. The museum display must, through

paintings, objects and plans, maps or *farman*s (edicts) convey the vision of the Emperor, the concept and the extraordinary architectural achievement, its spatial layout and the relationship of the sepulchral monument with the entire complex of buildings and gardens The site museum should address diverse expectations of visitors, especially children who should be able to not just see the monument but to understand it as a defining symbol of our heritage. It is not sufficient to merely 'see' our heritage even though that is easy 'instant gratification'. The Taj Mahal story is rich with a history of wealth, valour, cruelty, fealty and so much more. Interesting and educational facts such as the attachment of 54 revenue villages to support its maintenance for future years are relatively unknown. Its life was always ensured to resonate with an Urs, a commemorative Islamic ritual, which still occurs. There were *khwaspurra*s (quarters for attendants) and *khadim*s (hereditary caretakers) who served at the Taj Mahal late into the 20th century. The Gardens of Paradise, irreversibly altered into English lawns require to be re-imagined, if not in the actual recreation of the gardens but in its vision. There must be an explanation of the idea of a garden as paradise, expanding our own understanding of the philosophy and spiritual context of this iconic monument of love.

It could be argued that the Taj Mahal may not actually need a museum. The building is so spectacular that anything else is superfluous. That said, there are many buildings that are an integral part of the complex, small gardens, ancillary mausoleums and detailing such as finely jewelled inlay, the *farma* (stencil) of the pinnacle engraved on the floor and painted underground chambers now closed to public. The visitor to the Taj Mahal today has no access to the breadth and depth of information that went into the creation of this extraordinary complex. The visitor is victim or captive to the enthusiastic guides and their often apocryphal stories about how many men and how many years it took to build; the hyperbole increasing, as tales of chopped off mason's hands offsets the ethereal quality of the experience. I choose to highlight the Taj Mahal because it is the most visited site in India. It is the iconic image and showcase monument of India. The ASI has managed to preserve the site, frozen in a 19th century mindset that only a handful of its officers were competent to manage it and 'know' its real history. For me, perhaps, this is the only explanation why the two Taj Museums are so dismal, uninformative and lacklustre. Today, guides will dissuade tourists from spending an extra ₹ 10 to visit the museums. A site museum must elevate the mind, expand our knowledge and valorise our heritage. It is its own justification.

TERRACOTTA WARRIORS, CHINA

The finest site museum complex I have seen is the Terracotta Warriors in Xian, China. Discovered by a farmer tilling the soil in the 1980s, it was reported to the authorities and that is how one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the century began to be unearthed. Today, the farmer is a Director of the Xian World Heritage Site in perpetuity. The site is not only superbly protected but some of the finest pieces are showcased alongside the exposed trenches. The museum is outstanding; it uses audio-visual LCD screens in each gallery to explain the Silk Route. The lighting and presentation of this priceless heritage benchmarks excellence and is a matter of singular pride to the bulk of Chinese tourists. Emerging from the blackout of the Cultural Revolution that denied them their cultural pride, China's response has been extraordinary in bringing back its rich culture and showcasing it contemporarily.

CONCLUSION

There is a clear need today to revisit how we can recover our site museums from being *bhandar*s that leave the objects to speak for themselves, at best; to transforming these into becoming centres of knowledge, offering access to research and scholarship. A fundamental requirement is for the ASI to expand its own understanding of the basic philosophy of site museums as tools for learning about our heritage. Museums located at historic sites require to be extremely informative and need to engage its visitors in the site that they have seen, along with explaining its deeper stories both visually and intellectually. Without that we will have failed our future generations. There has to be a quantum shift in our mindset that our primary responsibility is not merely to protect India's heritage but to present it in such a way that the site museums become centres that will attract students, teachers and the laypersons to appreciate his/her heritage. Museums must become centres of excellence, where technology will draw in a young generation and where cultural knowledge becomes the most accessible tool for national growth. With enormous global influence, unprecedented travel, both inward and outbound; we are failing abysmally to rise to the challenge and valorise our heritage. It is my firm conviction that creative and visionary museums must become the cultural icons of 21st century India.

Managing Museums

SADASHIV GORAKSHKAR

INTRODUCTION

'Museums all over represent a strategic network of Information processing and distributing centres where general public is free to participate in Experiences relating to the transmission of image.'

-Kenneth Boulding

Traditionally, the concept of a museum was limited to an object centric approach covering three aspects viz. collection, preservation and interpretation. Today the 'Museum' has justifiably moved beyond the object centric approach towards a more context-based, participatory approach, focusing on a holistic experience for the visitor. As a curator, it is essential to realise this meaningful transformation and translate this into the design and management of any contemporary museum.

CURATORIAL INSIGHTS

From my curatorial experience, I would like to share conceptualising of two unique museums focusing on diametrically opposite themes: 'oil' and 'leprosy', though both included curatorial challenges because of the subject's interdisciplinary nature. While the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) museum displays required research in history, industrial archaeology, technology, politics, environment and economics;

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Brief history of the changing definition of Museum

Date and Event	Definition of Museum
Formation of International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1946	A permanent exhibition maintained for 'exhibiting to the public for its delectation and instruction' (including even botanical and zoological gardens and libraries with permanent exhibition rooms). Besides the traditional art-archaeology museums, this definition included museums devoted to crafts and industry, science and technology, natural sciences, medical history and even personalia (devoted to the life of a personality).
In the decade of 1970's the concept of Eco Museums, followed by New Museology that emerged in the 1980's.	Unlike the 'traditional' museum managed by experts, this definition advocated 'people's participation' at all levels of decision-making, recommended that the management and interpretation of these resources take place, where possible in situ, i.e. in the context of their original tradition and location. A welcome impact of this philosophy was the shift of emphasis from the object to the visitor.
1990's 'Museum of Ideas'	The Museum does not depend on original objects for its presentation strategy. Such a museum uses high-tech mass communication techniques to convey a serious ideology. But besides presenting a combined historical and contemporary scenario, its interactive capability helps the visitors monitor their own level of tolerance, for example, Museum of The Holocaust, Los Angeles and Eternal Gandhi Museum, New Delhi.

the curatorial content of Leprosy museum was concerned with history, medical science, sociology and literature.

ONGC's Oil Museum, Dehradun

The conceptualisation of the Oil Museum of ONGC is not only restricted to its technological achievements in the field, existence as Public Sector Unit (PSU) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity, but also addresses global environmental concerns such as mineral oil (hydrocarbons) as a non-renewable resource. A strong academic and historical data was collected to develop such themes as:

- Oil and Gas Industry in India vis-à-vis international activity.
- Emergence of national perspective - Parliament and other records.
- ONGC's own technological development in both onshore and off-shore extraction, an indispensable facet of industrial archaeology but not much appreciated in our country.

As a curator, I needed to know: What triggered independent India's Oil policy? Who christened the organisation? Why did they move to Dehradun instead of Delhi? Usually, no insider investigates such 'minor' matters. After a consistent search, we were able to trace enough documentary evidence to settle these and many other questions. The documentation revealed Keshav Dev Malaviya's contribution in shaping India's oil policy. The investigation further included display of 40 landmark events and history of all 10 ONGC institutes to give a complete picture that was simultaneously documented in 20 comprehensive volumes currently forming the main records of the museum.

Ackworth Leprosy Museum, Mumbai

Leprosy is a challenging disease often marred in society by total rejection of a leprosy patient at a time when there is also a sustained effort at finding a cure for the disease. The entire concept was divided into eight sub-themes to enable a narrative.

The museum display is sufficient to explain the concept and/or to induce a more inquisitive visitor to seek additional information on the subject. Museums need

Sub-themes of the concept

Sub-themes	Focus area
The Disease	Clinical
History of Treatment	Historical perspective
Official Reports	Awareness
Public Perspective	Sociological
Philanthropic Efforts	Humanitarian
Literature on Leprosy	Emotional
Archival Records	Academic
Health Education	Human concern

not indulge in pedagogic teaching; these should act as catalysts, as stimulants in the quest for knowledge.

Initially, we had no documents to support the various sub-themes. The search that began with the Department of Archives finally resulted in about 400 files which make the Ackworth Leprosy Museum a major centre for historical studies in Leprosy in the Bombay Presidency.

LEARNINGS

The three core areas within which a museum operates are 'collection', 'preservation' and 'communication'. The function of these three areas has been designated as 'Collection Management Policy' by the Smithsonian Institute, USA. It includes:

- Statement of Purpose.
- Statement of Authority.
- Collection Plan.
- Definition of Collection.
- Collection of Management Policy:
    - Acquisition
    - Documentation
    - Care and maintenance
    - Access
    - Disposal
    - Inventory
    - Risk management
    - Security
    - Temporary custody
    - Lending and borrowing

This complexity of job-handling skills needed in a museum sets it apart from other resource-managing institutions such as the archives. Museums and archives are two independent branches but are mutually reinforcing. To be loyal to its role in the area of continuing and non-formal education, museums need to update knowledge and as a consequence, expand the limits of their collection. A curator, therefore, strives to acquire not just pertinent thematic objects but those with high intrinsic value, lending an identity to the museum. President Abdul Kalam said, the 21st century 'is about management of all knowledge and information we have generated and the value addition we could bring to it'. Besides the knowledge that museums have collectively gathered over time, we have so much information around us that in the management of this knowledge we have to shift from individual to networking.

As a presenter of ideas and objects, museums are essentially an interface between 'resource' and 'community' and involved with transfer of knowledge. While some museumised objects symbolise the spiritual ladder, others mark aesthetic pleasure or evolution of scientific progress and the growing threat to natural and cultural environment. The issue is how must an alert curator communicate all these varied experiences to the visitor? The 'visitor' comes from a wide range of backgrounds and profiles, determined by age, education, profession, socio-economic standing and even gender.

This really draws us to the issue of empowerment of the curator whose duty it is to manage the complex functions of today's museums. These complexities have been succinctly paraphrased by the British Museum Association as:

- Academic knowledge of the subjects.
- Concern for physical care of the objects.
- Concern for aesthetic and educational values.
- Concern for presentation of exhibits.
- Concern for the visitor.
- Concern for developing an image.

The curator, therefore, needs:

- Motivation
- Skills:
    - Cognitive (communicative)
    - Affective (aesthetic)
    - Manipulative
- Knowledge:
    - Conceptual
    - Factual

Today, it is mandatory for museums to review their communication strategies and it is equally mandatory to induce a change in the mindset of those who must orchestrate such a change.

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Teaching Museology in India

MANVI SETH

ABSTRACT

The article traces the journey of museology as a discipline in India, takes stock of the current working relationship between museology and the museum profession and poses questions for future challenges. This uneasy relationship affects the development of both the profession and the discipline in the current Indian socio-cultural landscape. The course structure and the nature of museology degree being offered at various universities across India is analysed here in the light of changing role of curators, educators or display keepers in Indian museums. There is a gaping skill gap between the academic curriculum and the employing industry in the museum field. This needs to be urgently bridged to help India move into the next phase of post-colonial museum development.

INTRODUCTION

Museology, the science and philosophy of museums, is probably the only discipline that is completely overshadowed by its own profession and by other 'real' subject-matter[1] disciplines. It is interesting to note that 'museography', the practical application of museum functions, appeared even before museology in the early 18th century where it is defined as understanding the establishment of museums[2]. Museology came into being in the second half of the 19th century and is defined as the exhibition

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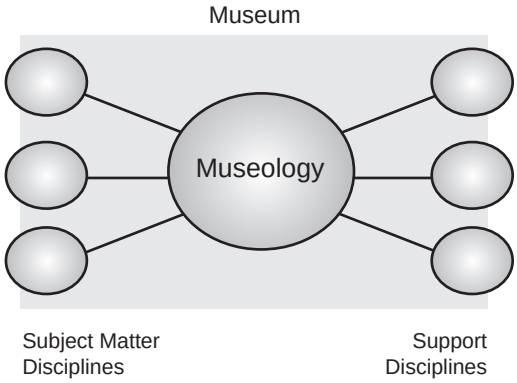
and preservation of collections of naturalia. As a discipline [3], museology started to take root around the second half of the 20th century, much after modern day museums had evolved. Even now its usage in English language is so limited, that every time it is typed, the computer shows a typing error. There seems to be no consensus on an all-encompassing term, theory and methodology for this discipline.

MUSEUM STUDIES PROGRAMMES

In many parts of the world, museum training programmes are designated as 'Museum Studies Programme' and their structure and content include the science of performing functions like documentation, storage and exhibition design. These programmes impart knowledge about theoretical premise and practical techniques for working in museums and art galleries. Some of these programmes like the Museum Studies programme offered by Leicester University, United Kingdom, also provide a specialisation in the 'subject-matter' disciplines among other things. In India and some other places, the course about the philosophy, structure and functioning of museums is termed as museology. At the Reinwardt Academie, Amsterdam, Netherlands, teaching a course in the theory of museum work is described as 'museology' and offers specialisation like conservation and registration. Few museums like National Museum of Finland, Helsinki; Museum de Arts Moderne, Rio de Janeiro; Museu Lasar Segall, Sao Paulo and Moravin Museum, Brno, run their own respective departments of museology that are responsible for carrying out varied functions of exhibition, registration and conservation (Mensch 1992).

Since 1952, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has so far provided three different definitions[4] of museology. ICOM has created two bodies, International Committee for Training of Museum Personnel (ICTOP) in 1968 and International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) for preparing a study material. Museology undertakes the theories and methods of other disciplines and applies these to museum work. Peter Van Mensch's model explains the interrelation of museum practice to museology and role of subject-matter and support disciplines.

Museum performs through the collective use and performance of the subject-matter disciplines such as art history, history, anthropology and natural history and the support disciplines such as management theory, communication sciences and design theory.



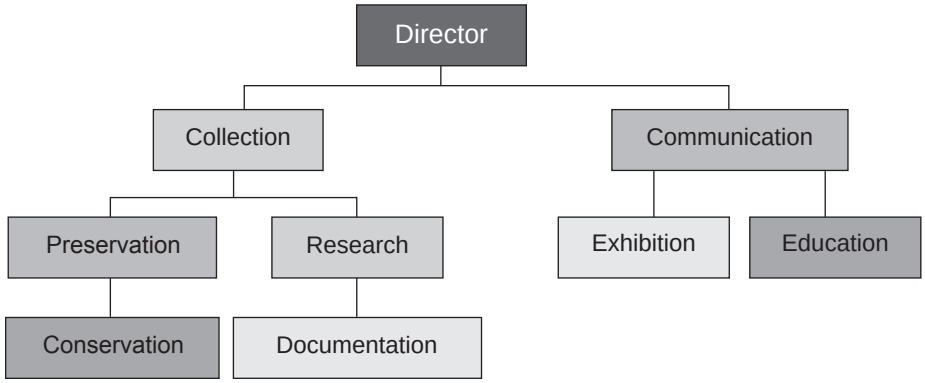
Subject-matter and support disciplines. Source: Mensch (2003, p. 4)

Museum as a public service institution is still evolving in terms of embodiment of functions and structure. Since there is no universal form that can be applied to all museums, there cannot be a rigid structure of the discipline that supports the profession. In addition to the expansion in research, the museology discipline must allow for flexibility in regional and cultural variations of representation and pedagogy. The division of subject matter disciplines and support disciplines need not always be so categorical and can be left to the discretion of the institution offering the degree, diploma or doctorate in museology. Apart from the basic, broad and common framework of the museology course and some fundamental museography features, the list of subject matter disciplines and support disciplines are ever-expanding as is true for any evolving profession.

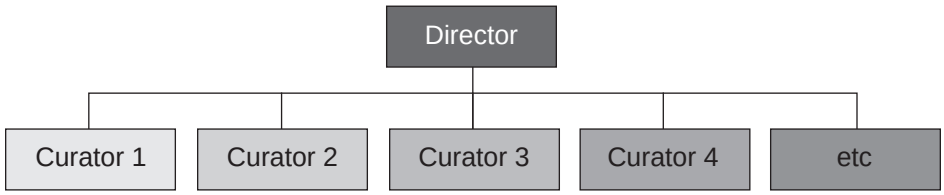
MUSEOLOGY IN INDIA

No serious enquiry or research was ever conducted about the indigenous social and cultural context in which museums in India operate. We opted for the 'adoption' instead of the 'adaption' model in our museology programmes.

Museums came into India as a foreign import of the British in 19th century. Initially, the curators appointed in pre-Independence Indian museums came trained from England in 'subject-matter' disciplines. There was a lack of provisions for professional training of curatorial staff in general (Markham & Hargreaves 1936). In 1952, V L Deokar started a two-year course in museology at the University of Baroda. Following this, courses were started at the Universities of Calcutta and Banaras and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science. The Aligarh Muslim University and Birla Museum at Bhopal also started diploma courses. In 1989, the National Museum Institute of History of Art,



Function based organisation model



Collection based organisation model

Conservation and Museology, deemed to be University, was started in New Delhi.

The course, its content, duration, structure and qualifying criteria however differs from one university to the other. To get into the post-graduate degree run by the Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, a student should have Master's in arts or science. For admission into the National Museum Institute, one has to be a graduate in arts or science, while the course run by the Aligarh Muslim University is one-year long and natural history-centric. The course of the National Museum Institute, like the one run by Kala Bhavan, Banaras University, is based on art and antiquities. The two-year course offered by the Kolkata University Course allows Education and Tourism graduates and post graduates to take the course.

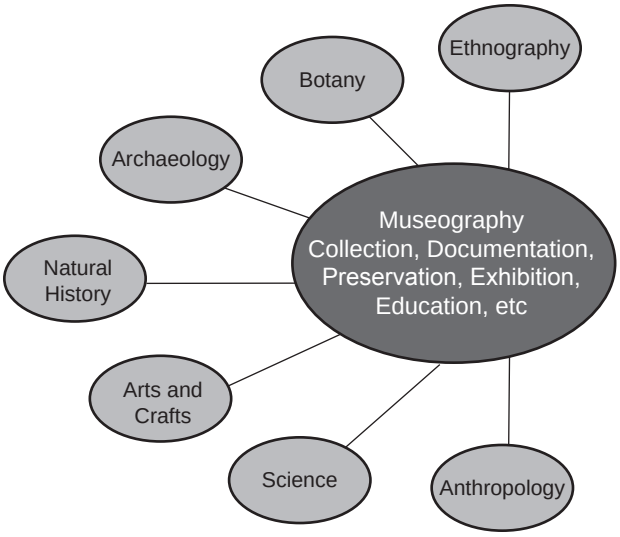
The components of the 'museology' taught in India are based completely on the support matter discipline towards the aim of providing the know-how of performing basic museum functions. Core courses taught across various universities in India with possibly some variation in terminology are: Collection, Documentation, Exhibition, Education, Management, Conservation and Security. The courses taught do not put a pre-requisite of post graduate degree in any subject matter discipline.

CURATORS' CALIBRE

'Curators are appointed and forgotten…In no part of the world is the curator so isolated as in India' (Markham & Hargreaves 1936, pp. 39-40). The qualifications required for being a curator or superintendent, formulated in pre-Independence India, were related to the subject-matter discipline to which the collection of different museums belonged. The criterion has remained more or less same in post-independent India as well. The only change is that in bigger museums like Indian Museum, Kolkata and National Museum, New Delhi, museology is now accepted in the list of 'essential' fields rather than 'desirable qualifications'.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya[5] in Mumbai has been employing museologists as curators and education officers for a long time. The functions and duties have advanced beyond collection over time, but the qualifying criteria are still stuck with the subject-matter discipline.

At present there is no uniformity in the qualifications required for being a curator or superintendent in various museums across India. The qualifications necessary for being a curator are often tied to the subject matter discipline to which the collection of each museum belongs.



Subject-matter discipline based approach to museum functions in Indian museums

POSITIONS IN INDIAN MUSEUMS

In the recruitment rules of the National Museum, New Delhi, among the nature of duties attached to the post of Deputy Keeper or Keeper are: conducting the specialised work of scholarly study, cataloguing research, to contribute to publication and carrying on collecting, safeguarding, exhibiting; interpreting for education and culture, the material in their respective field. For the Guide lecturers, the duties include providing guided tours at regular intervals during the day, conducting school classes on appointment through the galleries, leading organised groups on appointment and giving lectures.

Only few museums and that too the bigger museums, have separate departments of education and exhibition and fewer still have separate posts of Education officer or Keeper of the Exhibition department. Even for these designated posts, the qualification criterion is heavily focused on subject-matter disciplines.

FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE IN MUSEUMS

In the function based organisation model of the museums, the functions are divided into two separate categories of collection and communication. The other type is the museum whose structure is built around its collections. In India, museums' organisational model still runs on the old collection based museum structure. Majority of curators in India, other than being trained in their subject area specialisation are not trained in museology, even though they are expected to carry out functions of exhibition and education. The new class of upcoming museologists are trained only in support disciplines with only undergraduate, that is Bachelors' level expertise in any subject matter. Museologists in India are approaching the same set of museum functions purely with the aid of support disciplines.

The present scenario in India is that:

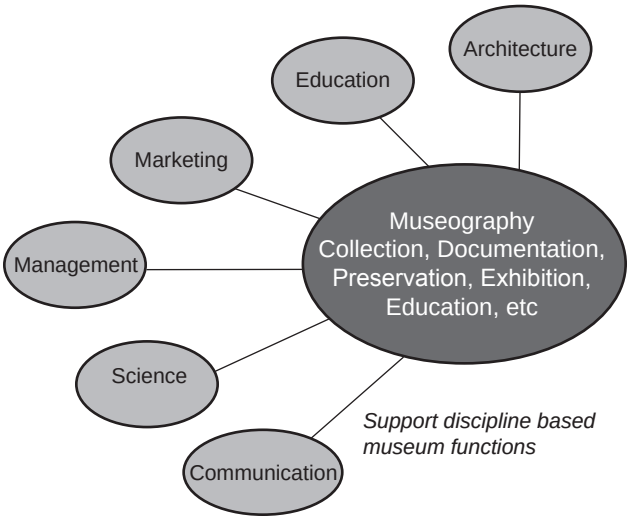
- All museums do not have separate departments of education and exhibition.
- Recruitment requires a degree in the subject matter discipline with museology being an additional desirable degree, which can be substituted with additional years of experience in the museum.
- Museology courses do not have a pre-requisite for Master's degree in subject matter discipline.

It is the job of any discipline to fulfil the training requirements of any profession and also to pave way for future growth of the profession. The gap between the theory and practice, between museological philosophy and concepts and the museum practice is too wide at the moment. There are problems of lack of synchronisation in the present museology curriculum and requirements of museums in India.

CONCLUSION

The skill gap between the academic curriculum and the employing industry is one of the most glaring problems identified by many officials and practitioners. Bridging this gap is possible only if we re-imagine our museums and then tailor the museology courses accordingly.

World over, museums are growing beyond mere portrayal of art, craft, archaeological findings and



Support discipline based museum functions

natural history specimens. Museums are moving towards parallel and competing narratives, community stories, comprehensive and comparative perspectives through material heritage. These are being viewed and increasingly being used as platforms for social change, voice of social protests, instruments of conflict resolution. But museums in India, except for science museums, do not organise exhibitions without objects and rarely engage in a dialogue. Museology courses in India are still trying to serve the needs of museums that are locked in time, like their artefacts. For example there are very few researches or projects on visitor studies, organising dialogic, story-telling exhibitions, on creation of educational programmes for all sections. The curator today as mere art historian, archaeologist, miniature painting specialist, numismatic expert or epigraphist is not equipped or empowered to carry out these functions. But this skill gap is not the exclusive problem of museums alone. Across India, officials, professors and industries are articulating similar problems. Only 25% of India's engineering graduates are employable by the industry, according to one estimate. We build airports, hotels, sea-link bridges, power plants, but we import technical workers from abroad. This is a typical symptom of an economy that is transitioning rapidly and skipping several generations to equip itself for the great leap into the 21st century information age. A National Skill Development Council has been formed in India that seeks to address this skill deficit and bridge the gap by upgrading the curriculum to suit the industry. The Council should, perhaps, include museological expertise in its scope.

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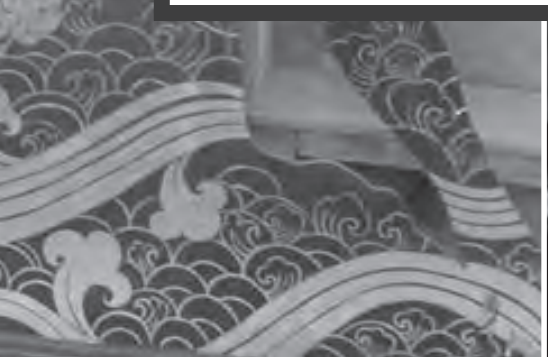
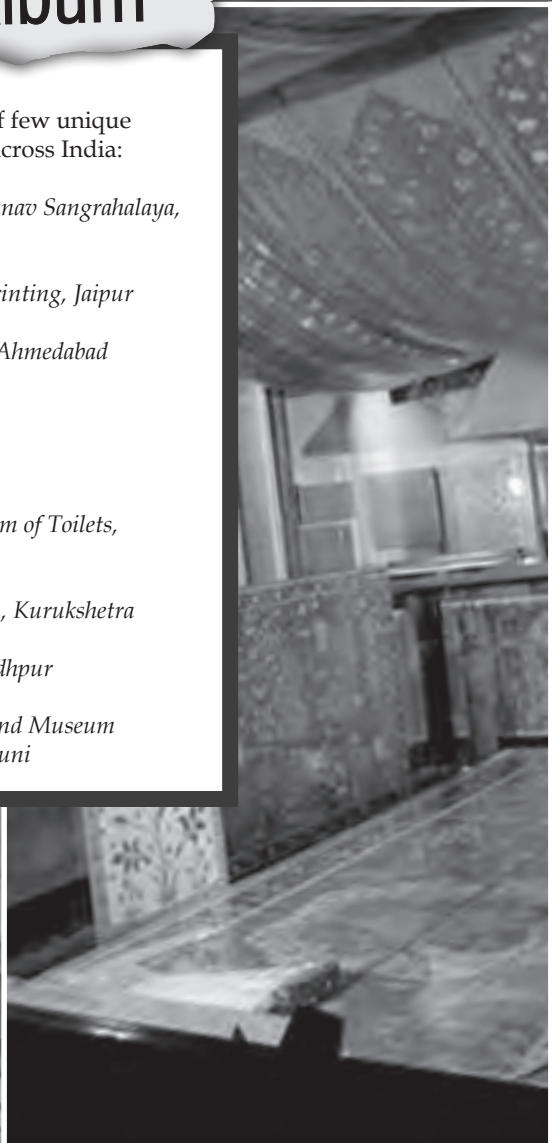
Notes

1. Museum field consist of two sets of disciplines, 'subject-matter' disciplines like anthropology, archaeology, natural history etc. and support disciplines like management, communication science, education etc.' (Mensch 2003).
2. The first recorded use of the term 'museography' is found in C F Neickelius' 'Museographia oder Antleitung Zum rechten Begriff und nutzlicher Anlegung der Museorum oder rairtatenkammern'. The first recorded use of the term 'museology' is found in P L Martin's 'Parxis der Naturgeschichte' (*Ibid.* 1992).
3. 'The first scholar to advocate museology as a discipline in its own right was Jiri Neustupny in his doctoral thesis in 1950. In 1883, J G TH Von Graesse writes about museology acquiring the status of a discipline in its own rights' (*Ibid.*).
4. In 1958, ICOM defined museology as: 'A branch of knowledge concerned with the study of purpose & organisation of museums'.
   In 1962, ICOM defined museology as: 'A study of the history and background of museum, their role in society, specific system for research, conservation, education and organisation, relationship with physical environment and the classification of different kinds of museums'.
   In 1972, ICOM defined museology for a third time as: 'A study of the museum institution as currently professionally understood, its history, evolution and present status & probable future development as well as the unique responsibilities of the museum to the society. These responsibilities include the role of the museum, their priorities, organisation, attitudes towards objects and collections and fundamental principles and procedures'.
5. Former LY Prince of Wales Museum.

Museum Album

This section includes visuals of few unique and representative museums across India:





A panoramic view depicting Desert Village and Coastal Village open air exhibitions situated on the bank of scenic and beautiful upper lake of Bhopal

A view of a gallery entitled 'Human Odyssey' displayed in Veethi Sankul- the indoor museum building of IGRMS

Chakhesang Naga from Nagaland performing in front of their traditional dwelling exhibit in the open air exhibition of IGRMS

INDIRA GANDHI RASHTRIYA MANAV SANGRAHALAYA, BHOPAL

Situated in 200 acres of picturesque site at Shamla Hills overlooking the Upper Lake of Bhopal, the 34-year-old Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) is the largest open air anthropological museum in India. It depicts the story of humankind in time and space through outdoor and indoor exhibitions. Outdoor exhibits gives a glimpse into the rich and diverse architectural heritage of India and also has pre-historic rock paintings. Indoor exhibits portray pre, proto-historic contemporary cultures in India.

Traditional house and temple of Toda community displayed as exhibit in the open air exhibition of IGRMS from Tamilnadu

A panoramic view of Veethi Sankul the indoor museum building and Tribal Habitat open air exhibition of IGRMS

AMHP exhibit replicates Sri Nayrayan Chhippa's (1920-2010) Jaipur studio with his equipment and an original pathiya (traditional printing table). Source: Suki Skidmore

ANOKHI MUSEUM OF HAND PRINTING, JAIPUR

The Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing (AMHP), opened in 2005 at Amber, Jaipur. It was the first ever museum that encourages visitors to explore the ancient art of hand block printing. Collections at the museum emphasise both contemporary designs and historic works. A research programme explores regional variations in design. The museum offers a variety of tours, hands on demonstrations and workshops with an in house block carver and printer and is immensely popular with the city schools. Located in a renovated 16th century *haveli* (mansion), the museum has earned a UNESCO award in cultural conservation.

Iqbal Khan prints with visitors of all ages and skills from India and abroad. AMHP also offers two to three day workshops. Source: Suki Skidmore

Left:Chanwar ki Palkiwon Haveli is now home of the AMHP following completion of renovation in 1993 by John Singh & Abhikram. Source: Suki Skidmore. Right: Exterior of the building prior to restoration. Local craftspeople restored the building following traditional methods inherited through the generations and using locally available materials. Source: Anokhi Archives

As part of numerous ongoing community initiatives, Gujarati musicians perform and visit AMHP. Source: Suki Skidmore

CALICO MUSEUM OF TEXTILES, AHMEDABAD

In the 1940s, Calico, a textile manufacturer in Ahmedabad, began collecting traditional Indian textiles from across India to educate contemporary textile designers about the richness of India's cultural heritage. The collection was displayed in a factory warehouse. In 1949, the Calico Museum of Textiles was opened to the public by Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. The museum, housed in a sprawling haveli (mansion) with inlaid marble floors and a picturesque garden, has also opened new galleries with collections of Jaina artefacts, miniature paintings and jewellery.

The Calico Museum of Textiles Collection is located in a Chauk which was reconstructed from 18th-19th century carved wooden house facades. © Sarabhai Foundation, Shahibag, Ahmedabad

Patolu exported to Indonesia, displaying in the Gallery 'Textile Trade of India with the outside world 15th-19th century'. © Sarabhai Foundation, Shahibag, Ahmedabad

Reconstructed wooden house facades at the Chauk. © Sarabhai Foundation, Shahibag, Ahmedabad

Royal tents displayed in the Court Gallery. © Sarabhai Foundation, Shahibag, Ahmedabad

Prior to exiting the Akshardham complex, Yogihriday Kamal, a sunken garden in the shape of a lotus flower and its leaves, features stones engraved with quotes by famous writes from across the world

AKSHARDHAM, NEW DELHI

The museum at the Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi portrays the essence of Indian culture, ancient architecture, traditions and timeless spiritual messages. The temple-museum complex opened in 2005. The museum has no display-artefacts in the traditional sense and leads the visitor on a story-telling, guided tour through immersive exhibits and life-like dioramas that depict the life of the saint who founded the group. The tour ends with a boat ride through a series of sets showcasing various eras of Indian history.

Bronze sculptures at the 'Garden of India' within the complex depicting stories from Indian mythology

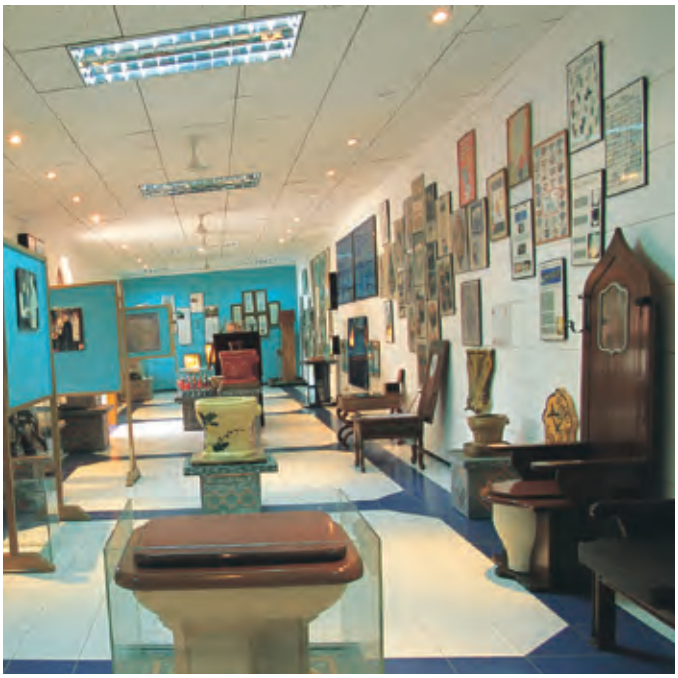
A sculpture in the 'Hall of values'. Here, the exhibits portray messages of non-violence, endeavour, prayer, morality, vegetarianism and family harmony through 15 three-dimensional dioramas and presentations from the life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Exquisite settings and statues in each diorama are brought to life through robotics, fibre optics, light and sound effects, dialogues and music, transporting the audience to 18th century India

Right and below: The visitors are taken through a boat ride, along which dioramas present scenes from life in the Vedic period

KITE MUSEUM, AHMEDABAD

The Kite Museum, run by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, was set up in 1986. It traces the unique relationship between the city and kite-flying and also portrays the history of kites since 200 BC. Its largest donor, a painter called Bhanu Shah, began collecting various designs of kites from craftspeople from all over northern and western India, since 1957. Artistically designed kites are displayed in showcases against light and it appears as though they are flying in the sky.

Above and below: Internal views of the exhibits at the Kite Museum



A panoramic inside view of the Museum

SULABH INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF TOILETS, NEW DELHI

The Sulabh International Museum of Toilets is a rare collection of objects from around the world that traces the evolution of toilets since 2500 BC. The founder and social activist, Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, conducted research and collected old toilets, archival photographs and documents from his travels around the world. The museum seeks to educate students about historical trends in the development of toilets and help sanitation experts learn from the toilet related social customs to help resolve current challenges.

A replica of rumble throne of French monarch

Model of French wooden toilet in the form of book stacks

Above and below: Models of ornamental toilet commodes from various parts of the world on display at the Museum

DHAROHAR HARYANA MUSEUM, KURUKSHETRA

The region of Haryana has been at the crossroads of cultures and civilisations that came from all over the world over centuries, and have had a deep impact on the social systems and culture. The Dharohar Haryana Museum, set up in 2006, portrays people's living traditions. Almost 90 % of artefacts were donated by people from far flung villages across the state. A second phase of construction of exhibits to depict the disappearing traditional folk life is under way at the museum.

Above and below: Internal views of the exhibits at the Dharohar Haryana Museum

Museum space, exhibition module in the museum space

Activities, primary school children from rural area painting environmental objects after visiting museum

Making and use of brooms for different purpose with different vegetation. Meghwal Woman from Lorti (Badmer) tying grass of burado for broom

MUSEUM OF FOLK CULTURE, JODHPUR[1]

The lives of rural communities in Rajasthan; their art, food, faith, festivals, fairs and folklore are inextricably tied to the crop patterns and seasons. The traditional artisans' communities of barbers, tailors, ironsmiths and cobblers pass their skills and knowledge down the generations orally and informally. The museum does not display objects that are prohibitively expensive or rare antiques and portrays the unbroken and living traditions of these communities.

Professional broom maker, a man from banjara community showing process of making panni broom

Broom exhibition, Mr. Kuldeep Kothari, Secretary showing brooms to Indian and foreign scholars

Note

[1] A perspective by Late Padma Bhushan Komal Kothari.

CULTURE-CONSCIOUS DESIGN AND MUSEUM INTERACTIONS

RANJIT MAKKUNI

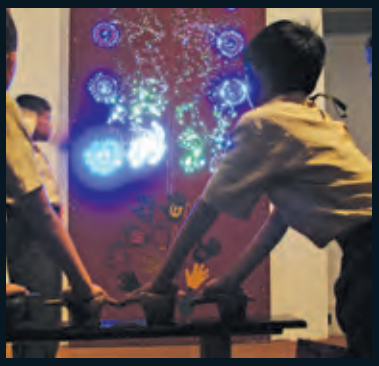
The Sacred World Research Laboratory has offered intersections between culture, crafts, design and user-interface technology and carved out new spaces in the fields of physical computing and culture-conscious product design. Two of their projects illustrate how the interaction between technology and cultural domain go beyond just museum applications and creates new opportunities for cultures rooted in nature and mythology.

ETERNAL GANDHI MULTIMEDIA MUSEUM

The Eternal Gandhi Multimedia Museum, New Delhi, presents the historical and spiritual dimensions of Gandhi presented through touch, gesture, voice and breath-based interactions.

In the Museum, entire content is retrieved digitally. The language of physical interface is derived from classical symbols like the spinning wheel, turning of the prayer wheels, touching symbolic pillars, the act of hands touching sacred objects, collaboratively-constructed quilts, sacred chanting in the collective group, the satsanga and the touching and rotating of prayer beads. These tradition-based interactions inspire a rich panorama of tactile interfaces that allow people to access the multimedia imagery and multidimensional mind of Gandhiji. The technology developed does not merely scan Gandhian images but also extrapolates Gandhian ideals to newer domains of information technology and design.

The E-Train installation captures the places Gandhiji visited by allowing the visitor access to the controls of the train. At each site, videos and animations explain the significance of the places in Gandhiji's life.



The Unity Quilt installation explores the Gandhian concepts of equality of religions. The quilt consists of two parts: the top part depicts the tree of life, a symbol found in all religious traditions. The interface part or the lower part depicts a representation of hands. By touching the hands, people can light up the tree, the symbol of life.

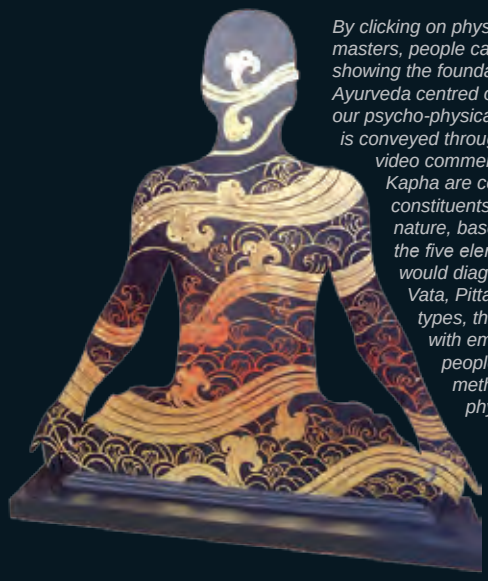
The E-Clock allows people to see Gandhiji's life mapped to the points on a clock. As the needle of the clock travels across the circle, events, documents and video footage of Gandhiji are played on a screen at its centre.

Charkha Mandala has a collection of small diamond-shaped Charkhas arranged in an interlocking pattern. This suggests the notion of collective power of individual action towards a greater common good. People spin interface Charkas placed on the outside. This creates ripples of movement, and collectively they spin to a symbolic unity, which highlights the values of the collaborative spirit.

PLANET HEALTH MUSEUM

The Planet Health Museum, New Delhi, is an interactive museum that allows people to access and re-examine traditional knowledge systems of environment and health from the perspectives of Ayurveda and Yoga. New forms of computing hardware are explored to express Green design.

In the introduction to Ayurveda, installations allow people to explore the origins of traditional health practices, including the contributions of physicians such as Charaka and Susruta.



By clicking on physical icons of the ancient masters, people can play back videos showing the foundational principles of Ayurveda centred on the constituents of our psycho-physical self. The message is conveyed through animation and video commentaries. Vata, Pitta and Kapha are considered as the three constituents of our Psycho-Physical nature, based on combinations of the five elements. As a physician would diagnose diseases based on Vata, Pitta and Kapha personality types, this sculpture of a patient with embedded buttons allows people to see the diagnosis methods of Ayurvedic physicians.

In this installation interactive leaves allow people to understand the medicinal values of natural herbs. Touching on a leaf in the interactive table allows people to play back video recordings showing the herbs in natural settings and their benefits.

The term Asana connotes 'seat' or 'stance' and in yoga implies a 'comfortable seat'. Its objective is to place the body in an easy attitude, not necessarily seated, or in a special position best calculated to promote the type of meditation without distraction. This installation consists of miniature sculptures of yogic postures on lotus leaves. By touching this sculpture, people can view the enactment of the posture by a Yoga master.

Acknowledgements

Images and text (c) Sacred World Research Laboratory, Ranjit Makkuni. Eternal Gandhi Multimedia Museum; Supported by Grasim, Hindalco and Government of India. Planet Health Museum; Supported by Department of Health, Government of India.

Note

To see project and photo credits, refer to <www.sacredworld.com>.

Ranjit Makkuni is a multimedia visionary, artist, designer, musician and the Director of the *Sacred World Research Laboratory and Ranjit Makkuni & Bliss* company. He has created a unique language for museum interactivity and expression, combining the finest in Asian hand skills based expertise and IT expertise.

Book Reviews

The Participatory Museum
by Nina Simon

RAMA LAKSHMI

Published by Museum 20
No. of pages: 352
Book size: 9'x 6'x 3/4'
12" x 10"x 1-1/4"
Published in Santa Cruz, California
ISBN: 13: 978-0-615-34650-2

Despite its title, 'The Participatory Museum', the central goal of the book is to rescue the museum institution from the increasing social apathy and shrinking visitor-base that it faces in the 21st century. By presenting a number of case studies of museums that have deployed innovative design and exhibit strategies, the book attempts to restore the museum's primacy in the shifting landscape of learning and dialogue. The book promises that participatory models can help museums become town squares for conversations and attract newer audiences.

Across much of the Western world, museums are struggling to compete for younger and newer audiences who are increasingly drawn to other sources of entertainment, education, community-networks. Throughout the 1990s and the decade after, museum literature was filled with envious comparisons of visitor-accessibility models displayed in theme-parks and malls. Today, the new threat is the opportunities for entertainment, sharing, learning, kinship that the Web offers.
The author Nina Simon, says that people have turned to the Web to share music, artwork, stories and comment on politics and discussion forums replete with participatory opportunities. This puts enormous pressure on cultural institutions like museums and makes it both imperative and urgent for them to actively re-engage with its visitors. 'The social Web has ushered in a dizzying set of tools and design patterns that make participation more accessible than ever', Simon writes, framing the looming crisis that museums are grappling with. She says that users of the Web are creators, remixers and redistributors of content, unlike the silent spectators in museums.

Simon writes about participation as an all-embracing umbrella term that includes sharing, collaborating, contributing and creating content in a museum. This, she writes, will help museums go beyond pushing authoritative, uniform and inflexible content indiscriminately to all the visitors. The museum, as in the case of Boston Children's Museum, will move from being 'about' the community, and 'for' the community to one that is created and managed 'with' the community. The community of visitors are no longer passive consumers of the museum's content and co-create content, much like the contemporary online mantra of 'user-generated content' or the Wikipedia.
Simon cites case studies of libraries, museums, consumer durable companies and websites that have used the participatory model in varying degrees. Some of these include tagging a book, blog, post, video or an exhibit as a favourite, or displaying staff-picks; using personal profiles of visitors to direct specific, customised content like websites do; take-home activities that are not designed as epilogues to a museum visit but as a hook for a sequel; open voting on contentious issues in the narrative to enable social engagement and social learning; creatively displaying visitor feedback; orientation maps that feature pop-outs and must-dos and so on.

The book examines practices that have been tried successfully across cultural institutions and can be a valuable reference kit for a museum educator and designer. While the goal of participatory techniques is a worthy pursuit, there are many in the museum world who fear that the institution may end up ceding too much control to visitors and may no longer offer a structured environment of informal learning. They worry that the museum institution, long known for carefully shaping experiences, may now grow increasingly cacophonous. Today, co-creating and co-curating are buzz words for museums' engagement with the community, but will this bring a radical, paradigmatic shift in the institution? Simon writes that with the transition from authoritative catalogues to multi-vocal content, the museum may end up looking like a coffee shop or a community art centre.

Any change that is triggered by fear or a perception of threat; in this case from the Web, may not be healthy for an institution. Organisations change in evolutionary and revolutionary ways. A museum cannot display a knee-jerk response and ape the online model of community-building and expression. But what is certain is that the museum institution will change in un-recognisable and un-controllable ways by the sweeping technological changes in the 21st century.

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Beyond The Turnstile

Making the Case for Museums and Sustainable Values by Selma Holo & Mari-Tere Alvarez

RAMA LAKSHMI

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This book begins with an explicit admission. It is born out of a crisis in the museum world. The crisis is that museums today find themselves having to justify their importance and relevance in the 21st century cultural, technological and economic landscape. The premise of the book is that museums can no longer take for granted a social consensus that museums are indispensable entities today. The book, therefore, offers a set of indicators of success that will enable museums to articulate their uniqueness and demonstrate their social value. This endeavour of what the author calls 'prove our worth to those who support our existence' or the process by which museums re-examine, re-evaluate and re-articulate their state and status, sounds ominous. It gives the impression that the museum institution as we know it, which is an Enlightenment-era product, is on the brink of a radical, paradigmatic shift, and perhaps, even collapse.

At the outset, one of the editors of the volume, Selma Holo, makes a plea that frames and underscores the current crisis: 'We should be able to convince our essential stakeholders that without museums, our shared world would be less interesting, less illuminating, less serious, less joyful, less connected to humanity, less equipped to understand and innovatively cope with the present and survive the future'.

The collection of essays in this book raise a wide range of issues that impact the museum, viz, inclusion, globalisation, alliances, public trust, knowledge, authentic experience and innovation.

Museums are under tremendous pressure these days to emulate the entertainment industry, lure large numbers of visitors and generate income from ticket sales, souvenir shops and cafes and other marketing strategies. But one author in the book, Gerardo Estrada Rodriquez, argues that a museum's move toward re-creation by building gigantic immersive sets, influenced by the movies and theme parks, is taking the museum's mission further away from its core values of object-based experiences. The book urges museums to focus on the 'authentic experience' that each of them can offer, one that allows visitors a potentially transformative encounter with the real, art object or a historical document. Such an experience occurs in rare unmediated instances without curatorial manipulation. Creating grand and seductive exhibits is a product of the commercialisation that has hit museums' mission.

The push to increase footfalls has also driven many museums towards the 'unsustainable universe of the spectacular temporary exhibition'. The focus on hosting blockbuster exhibitions often eclipses the core task of a museum; the quiet, arduous and continuous work of caring for permanent collections. Unfortunately, the funding world responds to the popularity of temporary exhibitions and not to the primacy of the permanent collections. Even the museums have begun looking at themselves through this ephemeral barometer of success. The authors in the book call upon the museums to convince their funding community that the care of the permanent collection is a pivotal part of their cultural DNA and needs to be upheld through sustained support.

The other benchmark of a museum's success lies in how effectively it is able to demonstrate its relevance to the community and include diverse audiences. Since the 1970s, a museum's social consciousness has become one of the overriding criteria of its value. The book, however, argues that inclusion should not merely stop at the goal of universal physical access for visitors, but also accommodate the narrative and ideas of those communities. When museums were born, they were regarded as temples of knowledge. But author Vanda Vitali argues that the museum institution today must acknowledge its limitations in presenting all points of view. It should not claim a monopoly on a solitary notion of truth, but allow spaces for other evolving ideologies to enter. The museum has moved from being the dispenser of knowledge to being a townsquare, 'a safe place for airing competing claims about the nature of reality'.

In the past few decades, museums in the Western nations have tied themselves to the mission of educating visitors, sharing cultural knowledge and 'counting every head and every coin' that came in through the turnstile. From being located in and inspired by the universities, the museum institutions began recruiting chief executive officers. In pursuing sound business practices and fiscal responsibility, it appeared that some of the traditional values of museums were forgotten. The book's essays are designed to 'jumpstart discussions' on restoring a museum's unique and sustainable values and help steer it deeper into the 21st century. But the book is not just a call for the resurrection of old, core values. It advocates merging them with the new opportunities for international alliances, technological innovations and communication that the new century offers.

Reviews

Scheme for Financial Assistance for Setting up, Promotion and Strengthening of Regional and Local Museums

An insight into museum funding by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India

SHIKHA JAIN

This review specifically traces the change in government perspective and initiatives towards museums in India in last two decades. It also elaborates the challenges faced in the realisation of government goals and debates whether the stakeholders have an equally important role in the success and failure of such schemes. Finally, it also raises questions about the role of the government in Indian museums at a time when more and more cultural institutions are being created with investment of private capital.

MUSEUM GRANT FROM MINISTRY OF CULTURE: A GREAT INCENTIVE

Everybody in the public and the private sector is increasingly concerned about the state of museums across the country. There is now a strong realisation even in the government that the dated, dust-collecting, dysfunctional government museums, which house some of the best collections in the country, require serious transformation. As an impetus to the 'museum movement' in India, the Ministry of Culture in 2008-2009 provided a new facelift to its archaic museum funding scheme of the early 1990's that resulted in a deluge of museum grant applications between 2009-2011 from various state government owned and private sector museums across India. The revised museum funding scheme includes some benchmark incentives such as allocation of substantial funds up to ₹ 50 million for government as well as private museums, inclusion of grants for new museums and upgrading of old, and even a special plan scheme allowing a funding bracket up to ₹ 250 million for museums in metropolitan cities.

In a small span of two years (2009-2011), the Ministry of Culture has received funding applications from a total of 111 small and big museums across India, amongst which 55 museums are owned by private foundations. How many of the museums finally received the grants? How is the grant utilised? What are the issues plaguing Indian museums or their ability to receive and implement these museums funds in an appropriate manner? Which of these will use the funds to transform themselves? And, what are the ways to improve the scheme to ensure effective deliverables? These questions will be explored in this review of the museum grant scheme.

All museum grant applications at the Ministry of Culture are processed through a rigorous evaluation by a special committee of various museum experts of the country. A total of 10 museum expert committee meetings have been conducted in a period of two years to evaluate the 111 museum grant applications. The Ministry of Culture has been very forthright in placing the minutes of all the 10 committee meetings on their website recently. Studying these minutes allows us to have a macro analysis of the scheme, an understanding of the wide variety of museums in the country, the committee's perspective and the museum owners' approach in renewing an old museum or creating a new one.

The review brings forth some interesting aspects:

- The range of upcoming museum themes in India.
- Major challenges in visioning, planning and implementing museums in India.
- Ways to address these challenges.

RANGE OF MUSEUM THEMES

The museum concepts presented to the Ministry of Culture in last two years are an eye - opener to the wide range of themes that can and are being covered by museum owners across India. Some of the unique themes include a museum of dance, a museum of Naga arts and crafts, a museum of endangered trees, a museum of transport heritage, a rural museum, a museum of vernacular architecture and virtual museums besides the conventional palace museums, rail museums and personality driven ones such as Gandhi or Nehru museums.

The museum of endangered trees at Chandigarh is truly unique in its display of natural heritage and the Ministry has provided support to it. The Gandhi Memorial Museum at Madurai is unique because of its priceless collections. One of the most valuable objects in possession of the Museum is the piece of cloth worn by the Mahatma Gandhi at the time of his assassination. This one object itself is sufficient to attract visitor to Madurai, a popular tourist destination. In the case of Museum of Naga arts, the museum committee was impressed with the effort of an individual or family to obtain and retain a diverse and valuable collection of Naga Art, in the face of the difficult situation in North East India where a large number of objects are being lost or stolen.

One of the most interesting new museums supported by the Ministry of Culture is the Heritage Transport Museum. The architectural and curatorial aspects of the museum were well appreciated by the committee because these chronicle the transport history of India. The curatorial concept, layout plans and design for the building sound very promising in the showcasing of India's industrial heritage. The construction of the museum building in Gurgaon is already underway after receiving the grant in 2010.

Another rare theme for a new museum is presented by the Society for Development of Rural Literature for establishing a 'Rural Museum' to put on display the traditions and culture of villages of the east especially from Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, with sections on performing arts and culinary traditions. Taking into account the new initiative taken by the society to create a Rural Museum, an approval in principle for the setting up of a museum was accorded under the scheme. The Museum of Vernacular Architecture and Building Traditions at Nawapind, Gurdaspur, Punjab, submitted recently by The Lime Centre, Delhi also proposes some distinctive displays.

The most recent innovative proposals presented for the museum grant are two virtual museums: one by Khoj International Artists

Association, Delhi and the other as the 'Museum of Sound and Images' by the Centre for Art and Archaeology, Gurgaon. In order to allow the development of virtual museums in India, the expert committee is creating specific stipulations for these museums under the scheme.

Though most of the museum themes presented under the scheme are noteworthy and reflect the entire spectrum of tangible and intangible heritage of the country, the new museums often find it difficult to move beyond the concept stage as it requires a lot of effort to convert such a vision into reality.

MAJOR CHALLENGES IN MUSEUM VISIONING, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

Despite the fact that the Ministry has outlined clear details on the requirements for visioning, planning and phased implementation of any museum, most cases presented are inadequate or lack in one or more prerequisites of the scheme. The Ministry has broadly outlined permissible museum interventions that cover, among others, restoration of old and construction of new buildings, the improvement of lighting and display of objects, increasing their appeal through digital and other attractive modes, computerising the inventory of resources, security of objects, imparting professional training to museum officials, involving interested citizens and making available to visitors, books and souvenirs of international standards. There is a special emphasis on the needs for capacity building, conservation and documentation and sustainability of the museum.

It is observed that the museum owners face several bottlenecks, firstly in envisioning a strong and singular concept and secondly in realising and implementing the vision and detailed plans. Some of the key issues are:

- Most museum proposals are not articulate in defining a strong concept and vision with a phased strategy or often cannot progress beyond the conceptual level.
- Good presentations and concepts do not translate into effective Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) that understand their visitor profile or have a vision for the future and a sustainable business plan for the museum.
- It appears that in order to encourage good museum concepts, the Ministry has allocated funds for preparation of DPRs for a total of 33 museums. Only 10 DPRs have been submitted to the Ministry till date. The amount funded for DPR preparation ranges between half to one million rupees and can be up to ₹ 2.5 million, depending on the overall cost of the project.
- In a substantial number of DPRs received, the main thrust is on civil construction or architectural design with lesser emphasis on curatorial aspect and interior design of the museum. The Expert Committee has recommended that in the case of new museums, the expenditure on construction related activities should be restricted to 60% of the total financial assistance granted, in order that emphasis on other core aspects such as display systems and techniques, documentation, conservation, library, publications and equipment is not diluted.
- Most museums face issues of expertise and manpower in preparation of DPR as well as implementing the project. The Committee has repeatedly identified the need for a DPR manual and the need for training programmes or capacity building.
- It is observed that the museum applications are not balanced in their regional locations. For example, certain areas such as Maharashtra are not represented at all.

HOW CAN THESE CHALLENGES BE ADDRESSED?

As per the Ministry's record, by July 2010, one year from the time the revised grant was made operational, ₹ 201.6 million was sanctioned for 29 museums across India and in principle, an approval was given for museum proposals worth ₹ 568.3 million. Despite this, by 2011, very few of these museums show any change while a majority are struggling with either the preparation of the DPR or trying to figure out ways to effectively utilise the partial funds received from the Ministry. This can be resolved by the Ministry and the stakeholders through the following suggested measures.

Role of the Ministry

- Introduce a user friendly and easy to understand DPR Manual or Toolkit[1] and make it mandatory for applicants to prepare DPR as per the manual.
- Make it mandatory for museum grant applicants to include capacity building or training programmes at all levels of documentation, restoration, maintenance as part of the implementation of works.
- Ensure proper response to the queries of applicants at all levels. This is possible by developing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) based on the experience till now and placing it on the web or allowing telephonic and web queries in this regard.
- Take initiatives to cut on the waiting time and procedural bottlenecks for the applicants to encourage better quality and larger range of applicants in a shorter time. Different stages of approvals with definite time-lines should be placed for presentation of concept, DPR preparation and final DPR approval.

Understanding required by the stakeholders or museum owners

- Vision, Outline and DPR preparation is an essential one-time, long term investment in museum planning, which also needs to be dynamic for subsequent revisions and should be adopted as a clear roadmap for development of the museum. It must be prepared by professionals but with direct engagement and participation of the stakeholders.
- Capacity building and training programmes are an ongoing exercise that the museums need to carry out at all stages
- It is essential to have a sustainable business plan for the museum

CONCLUSION

With a second wave of museum building underway in a more professionalised environment, it has become essential to develop a formal template for museum grants to ensure a uniform or universal understanding of the goals and a scientific evaluation of the projects. This is applicable not only for government grants but also for the growing arena of private funding of cultural institutions.

Shikha Jain is Director, DRONAH and chief Editor, Context.

Note

[1] The DPR Toolkits under JNNURM by the Ministry of Urban Development are a good example. A customised Museum DPR Toolkit can be developed in a similar manner by the Ministry of Culture.

- Details of the eligibility for the grant and process of application can be found at http://www.indiaculture.nic.in

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Dronah is an interdisciplinary organisation constituted by highly motivated professionals from various fields who share a vision for a better quality of life – one that is sustainable, environmentally sensitive and draws on the contemporary without foregoing the strengths of the traditional. It is our aim to actively promote sustainable development through conservation, utilisation of traditional practices and modern technologies, knowledge sharing and mutual interaction. The organisation is focussed on conservation and development of the built heritage, environment; and art and crafts with the involvement of local community, in addition to being engaged in documentation and educational activities.

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