

Museums In India: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Museums in India have come a long way, from the *chitraśālā* (picture galleries) mentioned in ancient literary texts to the more than seven hundred specialized museums of different genres today. The old concept of museums as storehouses of curios and antiquities has long been abandoned and museums are now recognized as institutions of considerable importance, encompassing a wide variety of ideas and information to be gained in an easily comprehensible manner. This article attempts to classify the different categories of museums that exist in the country. Some important categories of museums, like museums of national importance, state museums, archaeological and anthropological site museums, memorial museums, university museums, specialized museums run by departments of the Central and state governments, science and technology museums/centres, museums run by societies/trusts and private bodies, and, finally, private museums, have been described briefly with respect to their administrative set-up, the nature of their collections, etc. In conclusion, it has been specified that museums have now become institutions of specific learning through entertainment.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. THE CATEGORIZATION OF MUSEUMS IN INDIA
 - A. Museums of National Importance
 - i. National Museum, New Delhi
 - ii. Indian Museum, Kolkata
 - iii. Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad
 - iv. Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata
 - v. Allahabad Museum, Allahabad
 - B. State Museums
 - i. A. P. State Museum, Hyderabad
 - ii. Assam State Museum, Guwahati

- iii. Patna Museum, Bihar
- iv. Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery
- v. Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu
- vi. Government Museum, Bangalore
- vii. Government Museum, Trivandrum
- viii. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly The Prince Of Wales Museum of Western India), Mumbai
- ix. Central Museum (Albert Hall), Jaipur and other museums controlled by the State Government, Rajasthan
- x. Madras Government Museum, Chennai
- xi. Lucknow and Mathura Museums
- xii. State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata

C. Archaeological Site Museums

- i. Amaravati Museum, Andhra Pradesh
- ii. Nagarjunakonda Museum, Andhra Pradesh
- iii. Bodhgaya Museum, Bihar
- iv. Nalanda Museum, Bihar
- v. Red Fort Museums, Delhi
- vi. Bijapur Museum, Karnataka
- vii. Halebid Museum, Karnataka
- viii. Hampi Museum, Karnataka
- ix. Tipu Sultan Museum, Srirangapatnam, Karnataka
- x. Mattancherry Palace Museum, Kerala
- xi. Khajuraho Museum, Madhya Pradesh
- xii. Sanchi Museum, Madhya Pradesh
- xiii. Konarak Museum, Orissa
- xiv. Fort St. George Museum, Chennai
- xv. Sarnath Museum, Uttar Pradesh
- xvi. Hazarduari Palace Museum, Murshidabad

D. Anthropological Site Museums

E. Memorial Museums

- i. Gandhi Memorial Museum, New Delhi
- ii. Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi

F. University Museums

- i. Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, University Of Calcutta, Kolkata
- ii. Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
- iii. Deccan College Post-Graduate And Research Institute Museum, Pune

G. Specialized museums run by departments of the Central and State governments

- i. National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
- ii. Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal
- iii. National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum (Crafts Museum), New Delhi
- iv. National Children's Museum, New Delhi
- v. National Rail Museum, New Delhi

H. Science and Technology Museums

- i. The National Council Of Science Museums (NCSM)

I. Museums Run By Societies / Trusts And Private Bodies

- i. Asiatic Society Museum, Kolkata
- ii. Kannada Research Institute Museum, Dharwad
- iii. Bhartiya Itihasa Samsodhak Mandal Museum, Pune

J. Private Museums

3. CONCLUSION

'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 ENVIRONMENT' (FROM THE STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS (ICOM) AS ADOPTED BY THE TWENTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY, VIENNA, AUSTRIA, 2007)

1. INTRODUCTION

The origin of museums in India goes back to late eighteenth century, although references to *chitraśālā* (picture gallery) can be found in ancient Indian literature. Artistic representations of the *Jātaka* stories, etc., on the Bharhut rails (now preserved mainly in the Indian Museum, Kolkata) provide ample testimony to the concept of an open air museum in India as early as the second century BC. The inscribed label below the medallion shown in Plate 70A records: *Jetavana Anāthapiṇḍaka deti koṭi-sam̐thatena ketā*, meaning 'Anāthapiṇḍaka dedicates Jetavana purchased by paving the ground with a layer of coins'.

There are also records of royal antiquarians who collected objects of curiosity to embellish their palaces. Feroz Shāh Tughluq (AD 1351-1388) brought two colossal Aśokan pillars from distant places and established them at Delhi, his capital. The walls of the temples in medieval India narrating various facets of life, society and nature showed that Indians were not only highly skilled in various art forms but also in displaying them. Yet museums, as we understand today, did not exist in ancient or medieval India.

Sir William Jones, along with other scholars, laid the foundation of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784. This was following the first-ever realization of the need to collect materials hitherto

neglected, along with a systematic study for understanding the vast wealth of Asian heritage. The members of the Asiatic Society amassed numerous specimens of archaeological, ethnological, zoological and geological interest and brought them to the attention of scholars all over the world.

With the passage of time, Asiatic Society's collection grew manifold and the need was felt for housing this unique collection in an appropriate place. In 1814, the Society was able to establish a museum with Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish botanist, as its first curator. This was the first museum in India.

It is this Asiatic Society Museum, Calcutta which subsequently became the Indian Museum, Calcutta, under the Indian Museum Act No. XVII, 1866, later repealed by the Indian Museum Act No. X, 1910. The museum collection, however, was shifted to 27, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Kolkata only in 1875. The number of museums in India, since then, has steadily multiplied.

2. THE CATEGORIZATION OF MUSEUMS IN INDIA

At present, it is estimated that there are over seven hundred museums¹ of different kinds in the country. In recent years, however, a new trend of establishing specialized museums has started in India. Of these seven hundred museums, about one-fifth are similar in size and significance in terms of their organization, collections and programmes. The pattern of organization of museums and their administration vary a great deal, which can broadly be categorized as:

- A. Museums of national importance
- B. State museums
- C. Archaeological site museums
- D. Anthropological site museums
- E. Memorial museums
- F. University museums
- G. Specialized museums run by the departments of Central and State governments, etc.
- H. Science and technology museums
- I. Museums Run By Societies / Trusts And Private Bodies
- J. Private museums

A. Museums of National Importance

There are five museums of national importance in the country with respect to their collection, activities and administrative control. These are 1) the National Museum, New Delhi, 2) the Indian Museum, Kolkata, 3) the Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata, 4) the Allahabad Museum, Allahabad, and 5) the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.

The National Museum, New Delhi, founded after Independence, is directly under the administrative control of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and is wholly financed by the Union Government of India. The Indian Museum, Kolkata, the Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata, and the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, have been declared as Museums of National Importance under

Acts of Parliament. These are largely or completely supported by the Central Government, although they are under the administration of their respective board of trustees with strong local control. The Allahabad Museum was declared a Museum of National Importance by an administrative order of the Central Government with the approval of the Parliament and is administered by a society registered under the Society Registration Act No. XXI, 1860. It is largely funded by the Government of India.

i. National Museum, New Delhi

Delhi became the capital of India in 1911, but the city only began its explosive, outward growth after Independence, in 1947. Being the capital of the country and home to various population groups, the city has been at the forefront of the modern museum movement. The Central Government has also taken up initiatives to set up various kinds of museums to showcase developments in different spheres.

Delhi itself, the old, new and the area around, has many historical monuments. This, coupled with burgeoning examples of different modern architectural styles and designs, provides a panorama of architectural forms, mirroring the development of the city through the ages. Many museums also emerged and catered to this diversity, produced by this co-mingling of the ancient and the modern. Indeed, it was against the backdrop of this cultural mosaic that the need was felt for the National Museum to be established in New Delhi. The National Museum had been a dream of great national leaders like the first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, among others.

A great exhibition of Indian art and archaeology, assembled from various museums belonging to different parts of the country, was held in London. After its return to India, the collection was exhibited in the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi. It was this collection which subsequently formed the nucleus of the National Museum.

On the fortuitous day of 15 August, 1949, the National Museum was formally inaugurated by the then Governor-General of India, C. Rajagopalachari. It was then decided, that till a permanent building was constructed to house the National Museum Collection, the museum would remain at Rashtrapati Bhawan. The foundation stone of the present building was laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 12 May, 1955. This building was intended for the scientific yet elegant display of works of art, archaeology and anthropology. The museum was handed over to the authorities in June 1960 and was formally thrown open to the public on 18 December, 1960.

The museum possesses approximately 2,00,000 specimens of exquisite art, both Indian and foreign. This collection covers a span of more than five thousand years of our rich and composite cultural heritage. The museum has a rich Protohistoric collection of material which has been recovered from sites like Harappa, Mohenjo-daro (Pakistan), Jhukar, Jhangar, Amri, Nal, etc. It also has a collection of sculptures ranging from the time of Aśoka's reign (third century BC) to the Late Medieval period. A number of remarkable pieces of sculpture, such as the standing Buddha, a Bacchanalian scene from Mathura, a *vidyādhara* couple from Aihole, an inscribed image of *yaksha* from Pitalkhora, Maharashtra, etc., are also on display here.

The inscription on the right hand of the *yaksha* recovered from Pitalkhora reads: *Kaṇhadāsenā hīramakārena katā*, i.e., 'made by Kaṇhadāsa, a goldsmith' (Deshpande 1986) (Pl. 70B). Other important collections include terracotta figurines from Harappan sites, figurines from Ahichchhatra, Kausambi, Kondapur, Nalanda, etc., besides textiles and Persian and Arabic manuscripts. Figurines of river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā recovered from Ahichchhatra (Pl. 71) are the largest terracotta sculptures found in India and are the proud possessions of this museum.

Bronzes housed here include a few superb Chōla pieces as well as those representing the eastern Indian school of Medieval sculpture. The museum has a rich collection of miniature paintings, particularly of the Rajput and Pahari schools. A magnificent collection of central Asian antiquities was also transferred to this museum by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Pre-Columbian art from Mexico is another excellent collection here and is only one of its kind in India.

The museum has been lauded for its splendid chronological display of selected art objects in various galleries, screening of educational films related to art and culture, guided tours, gallery talks by experts, special lectures and its training programmes. Photography facilities, access to its reserve collection, a reference library and expert advice available for the identification of art objects have brought immense laurels to this museum. The conservation laboratory of the museum has made its presence felt even outside of India.

National Museum Institute of History of Art, Conservation and Museology (a deemed university) was established in 1989 as an autonomous organization, affiliated to the National Museum. It has been imparting higher education in related fields to students and professionals alike across the Asia-Pacific region.

ii. Indian Museum, Kolkata

Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), the first capital of British India, holds a pre-eminent place as a museum centre, not only because of the Indian Museum, the oldest and biggest multidisciplinary museum in Asia, but also because of the varieties of other museums in the city. Established in 1814, the Indian Museum has undergone repeated changes in its administration and organization since its inception. It is now under the administration of a board of trustees under the provisions of the Indian Museum Act No. X, 1910.

While the Geology, Zoology and Botany sections are administered by their respective Surveys, Art, Archaeology, Anthropology and Industrial sections are directly under the administrative control of the board of trustees representing the Government of India, the Government of West Bengal as well as various local bodies, under the chairmanship of the Governor of West Bengal. The Archaeology section of Indian Museum represents the finest as well as the largest collection of archaeological and historical materials belonging to India and south Asia.

Notable among its enormous collection is the explored material of the Yale-Cambridge Expedition of 1935, excavated finds from Harappa, Mohenjo-daro and other Chalcolithic sites in Sindh (all in Pakistan) and Megalithic sites from the south, besides a portion of the copper hoard from Gungeria (Madhya Pradesh).

This collection offers important and indispensable source material for studies and research on Prehistoric and Protohistoric archaeology of the subcontinent. It is remarkably rich in sculptures ranging from the third century BC to the Late Medieval period.

The bull capital from Rampurwa (now in the Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi), the *Kalpadruma* capital, Śrī-Lakshmi and the *yakshas* from Patna are some of the priceless pieces of the early series. In a separate gallery, the reassembled *stūpa* railings and one of the four gateways of the Bharhut *stūpa* (Satna district, Madhya Pradesh) are on display. No other museum in India has such a varied collection of Gandhara sculptures, recovered from sites like Taxila, Jamalgarhi, Sahr-i-Bahlol, Takht-i-Bahi, Peshawar, Swat valley and Charsada. Some masterpieces from Khajuraho and of Pāla art are also exhibited in the Medieval sculpture gallery.

This museum is also home to one of the richest repositories of Indian coins, including several rare issues. Of the reliquaries, the most important is an inscribed relic-casket from Piprahwa (Pl. 73A). The inscription on this is datable to the fourth century BC and the name 'Buddha' is written on it, the first such instance of the same. The inscription on the lid of the casket reads: *Sukiti-bhatinam sa-bhagni-kanam sa-puta dalanam iyam salila-nidhane Budhasa bhagavate sakiyanam*. This has been translated as 'This relic shrine of divine Buddha is the donation of the Śākya sukiti-brothers associated with their sisters, sons and wives' (Mitra 1971: 80). The archaeological collection includes representative examples from Cambodia and Java and the art collection includes items from Nepal and Tibet.

The museum also has a special Indian Painting Gallery which provides a chronology of the development of painting in India from the Prehistoric rock paintings to the renaissance period of Indian paintings (early twentieth century) in which the Bengal school played an important role. It has on display murals, frescoes, illustrated manuscripts, Persian calligraphy, miniature paintings of the Mughal, Rajput, Pahari and Deccan schools and *paṭa-chitra* of Bengal, etc. Another important gallery in the museum is in the Anthropology section showcasing materials related to the tribal and non-tribal population groups in the country.

iii. Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad

The Salar Jung Museum of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, is a repository of the artistic achievements of various European, Asian and far-eastern countries. A major portion of this collection was acquired by Nawāb Mir Yousuf Alī Khān popularly known as Sālār Jung III. He also inherited quite a few items from his father Nawāb Mir Laiq Alī Khān, Sālār Jung II and his grandfather Nawāb Mir Turab Alī Khān, Sir Sālār Jung I. *The Veiled Rebecca* (Pl. 72A), an enchanting marble statue purchased by Sālār Jung I in Rome in 1876, and the Sculpture of Man-and-Woman (Pl. 72B) are some of the prized possessions of this museum.

The family tradition and zeal for acquiring art objects continued with Sālār Jung III. After relinquishing the post of the Prime Minister of the Nizams in 1914, he devoted his entire life to collecting and enriching his treasures of art and literature till his death in 1949 at the age of sixty.

The astonishing collection of art objects, both in variety and number (about 40,000 pieces), is almost entirely attributable to Mir Yousuf Ali Khan. His passion for art connoisseurship served as the driving force behind the enrichment of the collection. Indeed, the collection, displayed in the portals of the Salar Jung Museum, stands testimony to a labour of love which continued for over forty years.

After his death, in the absence of any direct descendants, the vast collection of precious art objects and his library, which were housed in the Diwan Deodi, the ancestral palace of Sālār Jung III, were looked after by the Salar Jung Estate Committee. On 16 December 1951, with the idea of perpetuating his name, the Salar Jung Museum was brought into existence in the Diwan Deodi and was declared open to the public by Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India.

In 1961, through an Act of the Parliament (Act XXVI of 1961), the museum, along with the library, was declared as an Institution of National Importance and its administration was entrusted to a board of trustees with the Governor of Andhra Pradesh as its *ex-officio* Chairman.

At present this is the largest museum in India housing Medieval and modern arts and crafts. It also houses a collection of toys and dolls exclusively meant for children. No less important is its collection of manuscripts, which include many works by eminent poets. An emerald and ruby dagger owned by Nūrjahān (AD 1577–1645), a dagger encrusted with diamonds, rubies and emeralds belonging to Jahāngīr and equally attractive swords and daggers of Shāhjahān (AD 1592–1666), Aurangzeb (AD 1618–1707), etc., are some of the unrivalled exhibits of its arms collection. Some pieces of furniture associated with Louis XV (eighteenth century) have also found their way into this museum.

iv. Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata

The Victoria Memorial Hall was conceptualized by Lord Curzon (1859–1925), as a period museum in memory of Queen Victoria with particular emphasis on Indo-British history. Subsequently, it grew into a museum of modern Indian history starting from the eighteenth century. It was opened to the public in 1921. Renowned for its unique architecture (Pl. 74), the building blends a predominantly Italian Renaissance style with traces of Orientalism. The figure of the Angel of Victory, 4.87 m high and weighing over 3 tonnes, surmounts the dome and revolves upon its own base. The building is 56.08 m high up to the base of the figure of the Angel of Victory. The groups of figures above the north porch represent Motherhood, Prudence and Learning.

Declared as an Institution of National Importance under the Act of 1935, the Memorial is administered by a board of trustees under the chairmanship of the Governor of West Bengal. The museum has a very important collection of the visual history of India from pre-camera days, documented by paintings in oil and water colour, sketches and drawings, aquatints and lithographs, stamps and postal stationery, coins and medals, arms and armours, books and manuscripts, costumes, personal relics and archival documents.

It also has world's single largest collection of paintings by the eighteenth-century artists, Thomas and William Daniell. Its philatelic collection on Indian postal history is equally large and

unique. From Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's handwritten Qurān, Dārā Shikoh's translation of the *Upanishads*, Ṭīpu Sulṭān's personal war diary to cannonballs from the Battle of Plassey, Victoria Memorial houses a rich and varied collection.

If the initial Curzonian scheme of collection and arrangement of the exhibits in the memorial was seen as a composite representation of the Empire, the post-Independence collections could be regarded as reflecting the quest for a nationalist identity. This was evident from the setting up of the National Leaders' Gallery as well as several thousand other artefacts that were added to the collection, like Bankim Chandra's writing desk, Mahatma Gandhi's ashes, Jamini Roy's paintings, etc. The Calcutta Gallery, set up during the tercentenary of the founding of the city, provides a vivid picture of Kolkata, its life and society through the ages.

v. Allahabad Museum, Allahabad

Allahabad Museum in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, was established in 1931 by the Allahabad Municipal Board, and grew as an Institution of National Importance. It is now administered by a governing body constituted by the Government of India, with the Governor of Uttar Pradesh as its Chairman. With its magnificent building and exquisite collections of sculptures, it ranks as one of the major museums of the country. Several pieces of the Bharhut railing, fragments from the Śiva temple at Bhumara, sculptures from Khajuraho, Kausambi and Mathura and also some pieces belonging to the Gandhāra School form the bulk of its sculpture collection.

Its terracotta collection, the largest in the country, mainly from Kausambi and Jhusi, is very important. Several remarkable numismatic issues of the Kausambi rulers are on display in the coin cabinet. There are also some excellent examples of Indo-Persian, Mughal and Rajput miniature paintings here. The Mughal paintings represent some of the choicest from the time of emperors Akbar and Jahāngīr. The Pahari School is represented by a few fine paintings from Guler and Basholi.

B. State Museums

i. A. P. State Museum, Hyderabad

Sculptures dating from the Sātavāhana period (first to second centuries AD) to the time of the Kākatīyas (thirteenth century AD) are housed in this museum. There are also fine collections of old arms and weapons and of Bidri ware. The other important features of this museum are the copies of Ajanta and Ellora paintings, manuscripts in Arabic and Persian and coins of the Yādavas, the Vijayanagara rulers, the Mughals and of the Bahamani and other Deccan kingdoms. The Prehistoric and Protohistoric finds from Maski and other sites in Raichur district are exhibited here. Excavated finds from Yelleswaram are housed in a separate pavilion, attached to the office of the Director of Archaeology.

ii. Assam State Museum, Guwahati

Assam State Museum, established in 1940, occupies a pre-eminent place among the northeastern states. The principal attractions of this museum are stone and metal sculptures, inscriptions, including two charters of Bhāskarvarman (seventh century AD) several Assamese manuscripts written on thin barks and the newly developed ethnographic galleries.

iii. Patna Museum, Bihar

Patna, the ancient Pāṭaliputra, was the capital of the Mauryas (BCE 322–185), the first pan-Indian Empire, and it played a very important role in the political history of India till the Medieval period. The place also played a major role in propagating two major religions, i.e., Buddhism and Jainism. It is thus obvious that the art which was patronized by the kings and flourished in this region played an important role in Indian history. Patna Museum, established in 1917, has a splendid collection of sculptures including the famous Didarganj *Yakshī* (Pl. 73B), a polished lion-head from Masarh and the two torsos of Jaina *tīrthaṅkaras* from Lohanipur, all belonging to the Mauryan period, besides examples of Śuṅga (BC 185–73), Gupta (AD 320–550) and Pāla (AD 750–1174) art. The Pāla series includes one of the earliest dated images from the time of Devapāla (ninth century AD).

A large number of bronzes of the Pāla-Sena period, including the treasure trove of bronzes from Kurkihar, have considerably enriched the museum collection. It is also rich in terracottas collected from places like Pāṭaliputra, Buxar, Pulathura, Kausambi, Bhita, Rajgir, Vaishali, etc. Another important group of artefacts comprises the exotic ring-stones carved with fertility designs from Pāṭaliputra. Prehistoric and Protohistoric implements discovered from different parts of Bihar are also on display here. No less significant is its collection of Tibetan banners and coins, particularly the punch-marked ones, the earliest numismatic issues of the subcontinent.

iv. Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery

The Baroda Museum, the largest and the most important in Gujarat, displays objects from the Harappan times to the fifteenth century AD in its Archaeology section. Of the collection of bronzes, the Māṭṛikās and the Jaina bronzes from Akota are noteworthy. The collection of Indian paintings representing different schools and the International sections are major attractions for visitors.

v. Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu

The greatest attraction of the Dogra Art Gallery is its collection of over four hundred Pahari miniature paintings. It also has a fine collection of historic arms, textiles and manuscripts including the *Shāh-nāmā*, the *Sikandar-nāmā*, etc.

vi. Government Museum, Bangalore

The Government Museum, Bangalore, was founded in 1886. It is a general museum, dealing with archaeology, art, history, numismatics, ethnology, geology, botany and zoology. An international museum collection and a building in the Shrimanthi Bhavan, Bangalore, were recently donated to the state. Other museums in the state, which come under the ASI and various other organizations, testify to the archaeological and historical importance of the region.

vii. Government Museum, Trivandrum

Kerala, on the south-west coast of India, was one of the first states to boast of a general museum – the Government Museum, Trivandrum – founded in 1817. It has an important Natural History section with an excellent zoo, as well as departments of Archaeology, Arts and Ethnology. Separately administered, yet under the control of the state, the Government Art Gallery has an international collection of paintings.

The State Department of Archaeology, Kerala, also has several museums under its jurisdiction, including the Archaeological Museum, Trichur, which has on display excavated materials from Megalithic sites, stone and bronze sculptures, copies of mural paintings, etc. Another archaeological museum was installed in one of the buildings of the former rulers of Travancore at Padmanabhapuram, known as the Padmanabhapuram Palace and Archaeological Museum. The palace itself, built in the style of wooden architecture characteristic of the region, is a handsome building having murals of historic and aesthetic interest.

viii. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly The Prince of Wales Museum of Western India), Mumbai

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, founded in 1914 and finally opened to the public in 1921, is under the administration of a board of trustees. It is recognized as a Museum of National Importance and receives grants from the Central Government for its development and educational facilities. It possesses an important collection of miniature paintings from all periods and schools, and a wide variety of sculptures and decorative arts. The museum also has the Tata Collection of Western paintings, from the old masters to the nineteenth century, and a Chinese collection which is particularly rich in ceramics. The Bombay Natural History Society, originally founded in 1883, installed its natural history collection in this museum in 1923 and these have now become part of the Natural History section of the Vastu Sangrahalaya. The section has won accolade throughout India for its excellence in presentation and high scientific standards.

In recent years, the galleries devoted to archaeology and art in the museum have been undergoing a gradual transformation from an older style of presentation to a style at the forefront of the Indian achievement. This effort merits great praise as the handsome building (Pl. 75) incorporates

most of the architectural features considered appropriate for museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This, however, creates difficulties for contemporary styles of installation. The Nepali-Tibetan Gallery, completed early in 1963, and its small bronze gallery, recently finished, are good examples of modern presentation using advanced materials now available in India. The Miniature Painting Gallery, likewise, caters to the needs of scholars with a large collection, while simultaneously holding the interest of general viewers. The climatic conditions of Mumbai served to determine the presentation – in frames accommodating several miniatures.

The museum is very actively engaged in many aspects of popular education and its location in a park in the heart of the city serves as ideal in this regard. It has a large annual attendance drawn from the most diverse sections of this great city's population, and both Indian and foreign tourists are numerous. It also serves the student community of the University of Mumbai, which is situated nearby. Associated with the museum, on its staff and board of trustees, are distinguished scholars who have contributed significantly to the development of Indian art studies. Indeed in recent years, in association with the University of Mumbai, the museum has become a centre of post-graduate research in art and is assisting in the training of young art scholars. Foreign scholars are also offered all possible help and facilities to help their studies and research.

ix. Central Museum (Albert Hall), Jaipur and other museums controlled by the State Government, Rajasthan

Rajasthan has perhaps the most extensive system of museums among all states, organized under the Director of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Rajasthan. The Government Central Museum, Jaipur, founded in 1876, is the largest and most advanced with respect to reorganization and installation of its collections. The museum, housed in a late nineteenth-century building, presents considerable challenges for adapting old elements, particularly furnishings, to contemporary needs. It aims to cater primarily to the archaeology, arts, costumes and customs of Rajasthan. The region, with its distinctive and rich folk traditions and archaeological heritage, offers wide scope for such an undertaking.

Other museums within the state system are located at Ajmer, Alwar, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Jhalawar, Jodhpur, Kotah and Udaipur. These are the erstwhile capitals of the native states and in most cases the museums were founded by the rulers between 1909 and 1944. The one exception is the Victoria Hall Museum at Udaipur, which was founded in 1887 to honour Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. It was renamed the City Palace Museum, and the collections were transferred to new quarters in the old palace of Udaipur.

x. Madras Government Museum, Chennai

The Madras Government Museum, in terms of size, level of operation, standards and influence, may be considered as equivalent to any Museum of National Importance. Chennai, the great cultural hub

of the south, has managed to steadfastly hold on to the ancient traditions of thought and culture which have died out elsewhere.

The museum was founded in 1851 to house geological specimens and to promote and improve agriculture in the region. It was only towards the latter part of the nineteenth century that the emphasis on natural history yielded to the development of a general museum of archaeology, art, applied arts and numismatics. This was precipitated by the acquisition of the famous Amaravati panel of sculptures and other archaeological collections.

The archaeological and art collections of the museum include stone sculptures. Notable among these are the sculptural panels from Amravati (Pl. 76A), Jaggayapeta and other Buddhist sites, bronzes, coins, arms and paintings. Further, as scholars often point out, the widest possible range of icons in bronze from a limited area is available here for study under a single roof. The collections of religious images cast using the *cire perdue* technique, especially the tenth-century Chōla examples, are of special importance since this was one of the major art forms of south India.

Like all state museums, the Madras Government Museum benefits enormously from discoveries that come under the purview of the Indian Treasure Trove Act No. VI, 1878. The Natural History section, including Botany and Zoology, and the Ethnology and Industrial and Applied Art sections, have seen gradual modernization in recent years. The Children's Gallery offers instructive and attractive exhibits while lively educational programmes are held for schools to supplement regular classroom activity. With financial assistance from the Central Government, the museum has improved its older buildings, and has built a new conservation laboratory. Research is an important field of activity in this museum.

The Art Gallery was added in 1951 in a separate building, on the occasion of the museum's centenary. The museum is thus installed in a complex of buildings, some of which are built in modern, functional style, with simple interiors adaptable to different exhibition requirements.

xi. Lucknow and Mathura Museums

Uttar Pradesh has two museums of major importance: the Lucknow Museum, founded in 1863, and the Mathura Museum, founded in 1874. The first is a general museum while the second is devoted entirely to archaeology. The first unit of the Lucknow Museum's new building contains sizeable collections of natural history and art and a particularly large one of coins.

The next unit provides space for exhibition and storage of its first-class archaeological collection, including stone sculptures and terracottas, principally of the Kushan (second to third centuries AD) and the Gupta (fifth to sixth centuries AD) periods. The natural history exhibits in the new building are largely made up of full-scale habitat groups of the fauna and flora of this region. The arrangement is designed to attract attention and engage interest, rather than serve any strictly scientific purpose. An ingenious and attractive arrangement allows natural daylight to be directed within.

Mathura was the southern centre of Kushan power and the focus of religious and political activity during the Gupta period. It continued to be a centre for sculpture in the locally available red spotted sandstone throughout a lengthy succession of periods and styles. The Mathura Archaeological

Museum, the first site museum in India, has a large collection of fine quality. Most notable is the inscribed, almost life-size, headless statue of Kanishka (1874). The inscription in Brāhmī reads, 'Mahārājā Rajatiraja Devaputro Kanisko' meaning, 'the great king, king of kings, Devaputra (the son of god) Kaniska' (Pl. 76B). The Kushan emperor of the second century AD is seen in his central Asian costume wearing a long coat and bulky felt boots. Terracottas of a wide range of styles, some undoubtedly pre-Mauryan, are also on display in the museum.

xii. State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata

Set up in 1962, the State Archaeological Museum, West Bengal, houses an array of antiquities displayed in five galleries. These range in date from the Prehistoric to the Medieval period. The museum is singularly notable for its rich collection of Palaeolithic tools and microliths, mainly from the Susunia hill region (Bankura district) and other sites. Another important collection of the museum pertains to the excavated material from the site of Pandu-Rajar-Dhibi (Bardhaman district). The collection of the recently excavated monastic site of Jagjibanpur (Maldah district) has also considerably enriched its collection.

The sculptural art of Bengal in diverse mediums, terracotta, stucco, stone and metal, belonging to the Maurya, the Śuṅga, the Kushan, the Gupta and the Pāla-Sena periods occupy an important place among the exhibited objects. The museum also has galleries displaying the paintings of eminent artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

C. Archaeological Site Museums

Although a vast quantity of antiquarian remains were collected in the ASI as a result of various explorative investigations that were initiated since the time of its first Director General, Alexander Cunningham, the creation of site museums had to wait until the arrival of Sir John Marshall, who initiated the founding of the local museums at Sarnath (1904), Agra (1906), Ajmer (1908), Delhi Fort (1909), Bijapur (1912), Nalanda (1917) and Sanchi (1919).

The concept of site museums is well elucidated by Hargreaves, one of the former Directors 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 their natural surroundings and not lose focus by being transported' (Markham 1936). A separate Museums Branch in ASI was created in 1946 by Sir Mortimer Wheeler. After independence, there was a spurt in the growth of site museums in ASI.

The site museums under the administrative control of the ASI, Government of India, can be classed as altogether separate. There are at present forty-three site museums² of various categories with large and important collections excellently displayed in different parts of the country. Many of them house excavated materials from the sites, *disjecta membra* of monuments as well as detached archaeological remains found around the region, while others are period and personalia museums.

Site museums are outstanding, local, archaeology or history museums. The great archaeological sites like Sarnath, Bodhgaya, Nalanda, Konarak, Sanchi, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and Hampi have excellent museums showcasing the rich cultural and archaeological heritage of their respective regions. The museums at Khajuraho, Halebid and Bijapur are attached to the monuments, while others, like the Red Fort Museum, the Fort St. George Museum, the Tipu Sultan Museum, the Mattancherry Palace Museum and the Hazarduari Palace Museum are period museums as they deal with objects from a particular period in time. Some of the important museums and their collections are described below.

i. Amaravati Museum, Andhra Pradesh

Amaravati, a famous Buddhist site in India, occupies a pre-eminent position in the history of Indian art. Amravati Museum, established in 1951, contains many pieces of carved architectural fragments of the Amravati *stūpa* as well as of its railing which range in date from the second century BC to the third century AD. The pride of place is occupied by a small group of limestone sculptures unmistakably imprinted with the Bharhut tradition. There are beautiful sculptures datable to the Medieval period as well.

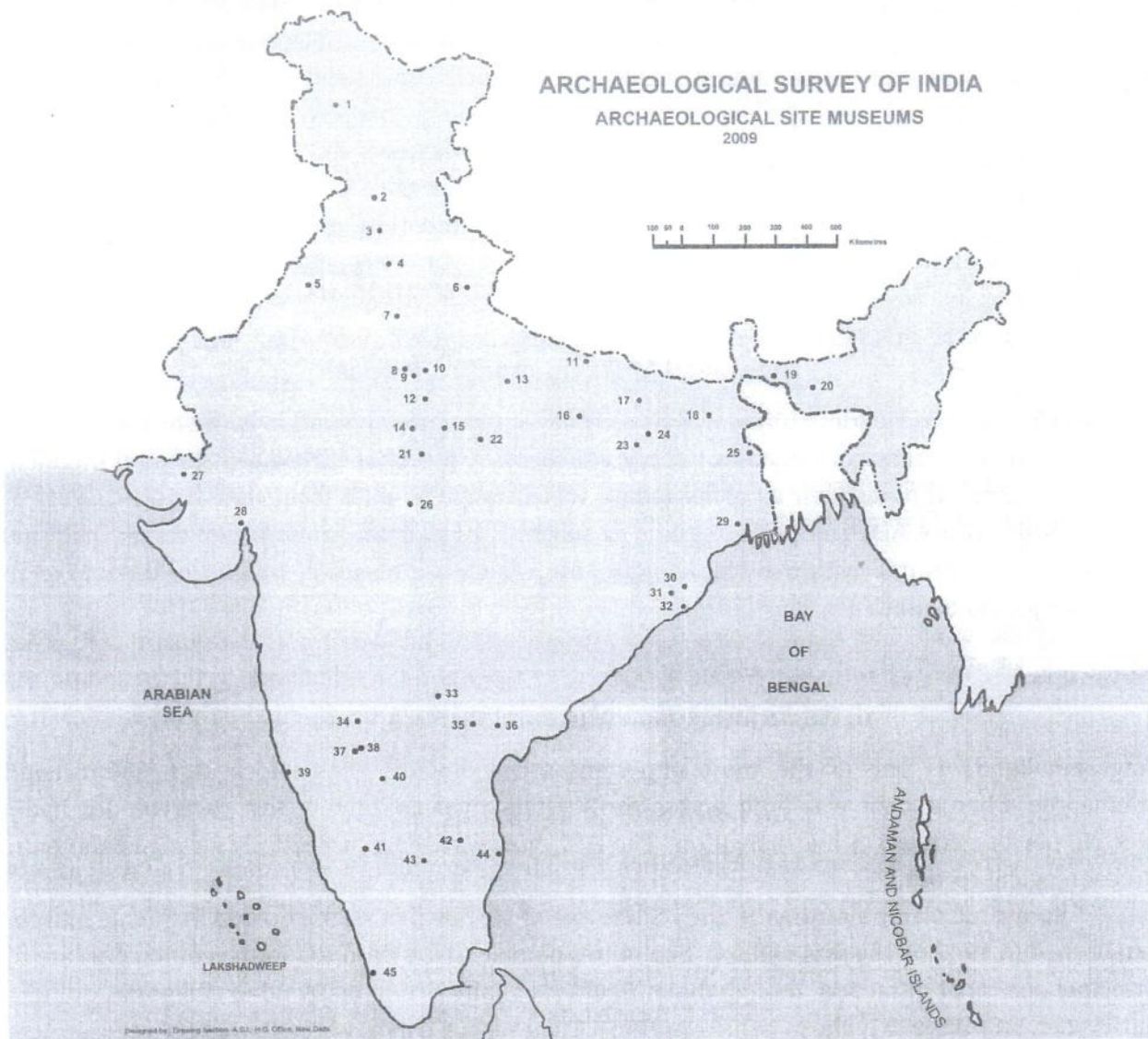
ii. Nagarjunakonda Museum, Andhra Pradesh

Nagarjunakonda is one of the most important archaeological sites which was unfortunately submerged when a dam was built across the Krishna river creating a vast reservoir for hydro-electric power generation and irrigation. The ASI, however, had successfully salvaged the entire archaeological record.

Excavated materials from the Early Stone Age to Medieval times are housed in the site museum established in 1949 on the same hilltop. Sculptures datable to the third to fourth centuries AD are the principal objects of attraction, though the museum is equally rich in many other categories of Indian antiquities. This is the only site in India where important salvaged monuments have been reconstructed *ex situ* above the water level. The museum is the first island-museum in India. Nagarjunakonda is a spectacular site where a traveller may admire a part of India's great heritage from the past and a major achievement of contemporary India.

iii. Bodhgaya Museum, Bihar

Bodhgaya (A World Heritage Site) is regarded as one of the sacred pilgrimage sites for Buddhists all over the world, as it was here that Prince Siddhārtha got enlightenment and became the Buddha. A temple was constructed to mark this event of the Buddha's life. Known as the Mahabodhi temple, it is an architectural marvel embellished with artistic creations. Bodhgaya Museum was founded in 1956 to house the detached sculptures and excavated antiquities from the site.



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|---|---|--|
| 1. Burzahom Site Museum (proposed) | 13. Residency Museum | 29. Tamluk Museum |
| 2. Kangra Fort Museum | 14. Shivpuri Museum (proposed) | 30. Ratnagiri Museum |
| 3. Ropar Museum | 15. Rani Jhansi Museum (proposed), Jhansi | 31. Lalitagiri Site Museum (proposed) |
| 4. Sheikh Chilli's Tomb, Thanesar | 16. Sarnath Museum | 32. Konark Museum |
| 5. Kalibangan Museum | 17. Vaishali Museum | 33. Kondapur Museum |
| 6. Jageshwar Museum, Almora | 18. Vikramshila Museum, Antichak | 34. Bijapur Museum |
| 7. Purana Qila Museum, Archaeological Museum (Red Fort), Indian War Memorial Museum (Red Fort), Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya (Red Fort), Swadhinata Senani Smarak Sangrahalaya (Salimgarh), and Children's Museum (proposed), Delhi | 19. Cooch Bihar Palace Museum | 35. Nagarjunakonda Museum |
| 8. Deeg Palace Museum | 20. Surya Pahar Museum, Goalpara | 36. Amravati Museum |
| 9. Fatehpur Sikri Museum | 21. Chanderi Museum and Period Museum (proposed), Chanderi | 37. Badami Museum |
| 10. Taj Museum, Agra | 22. Khajuraho Museum | 38. Aihole Museum |
| 11. Piprahwa Site Museum (proposed) | 23. Bodhgaya Museum | 39. Velha Goa Museum, Goa |
| 12. Gwalior Museum | 24. Nalanda Museum | 40. Kamlapur Museum, Hampi |
| | 25. Hazarduari Palace Museum, Murshidabad | 41. Halebidu Museum |
| | 26. Sanchi Museum and Sir John Marshall Memorial (proposed), Sanchi | 42. Chandragiri Museum |
| | 27. Archaeological Museum, Dholavira | 43. Tipu Sultan Museum, Srirangapatana |
| | 28. Archaeological Museum, Lothal | 44. Fort St George Museum, Chennai |
| | | 45. Mattancherry Palace Museum |

FIG 1 Distribution of Archaeological Site Museums under the ASI

The museum has a collection of Buddhist sculptures ranging from the first century BCE to the eleventh century AD. One can also see the relics of the old temple and remains of railings of the temple datable from the second to first centuries BC. Of the notable sculptures housed in the museum mention may be made of the *yakshī* figure, crowned Buddha in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā* (Pl. 77A), Maitreya, images of Buddha in different stances, standing image of Mañjuśrī, terracotta plaque depicting Buddha in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā*, railing pillars depicting Sūrya (one of the earliest representations in Indian art) and the *Jātaka* stories, etc., the panel showing Sahasrabuddha, *Sapta-mātrikā*, *Dikpālas*, *Daśāvatāra* of Viṣṇu, and bronze sculptures of Buddha of the Pāla period, etc.

iv. Nalanda Museum, Bihar

Nalanda is renowned for the largest Buddhist monastery as well as a great seat of learning. The university was not only a centre of religious or philosophical studies but also of secular subjects like science, astronomy, medicine, logic, etc. The site museum established in 1917 has a fine collection of stone and bronze sculptures (Pl. 77B) of the Buddhist gods and goddesses and a few images of the Hindu pantheon, all representing the Pāla school of art at its best. The late-Gupta period is represented by a few stucco heads. Inscriptions of the time of Yaśovarmadeva and Vipulaśrīmitra of the eighth and twelfth centuries AD respectively, sealings of royalties of the Gupta and the Maukhari dynasties and numerous official sealings of the Nalanda monastery are some of the interesting features of this museum. Some antiquities from Rajgir are also on exhibit.

v. Red Fort Museums, Delhi

Shāhjahān transferred his capital from Agra to Delhi in 1638 and built the Red Fort on the banks of the Yamuna and decorated it with palaces, durbar halls, mosques, etc. with great care. The Red Fort complex houses four different museums: the Mumtaz Mahal Museum, the Indian War Memorial Museum, the Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya and the Swatantrata Senani Museum.

The first museum is housed in one of the palaces of the fort known as the Mumtāz Mahal, built by Shāhjahān for his beloved queen. Antiquities like inscriptions of the Sultanate and the Mughal periods, arms, old documents like *farmans*, *sanads* and maps, relics of the 1857 upheaval, carpets, manuscripts and specimens of calligraphy, dresses, etc., of the Mughal period are displayed in this museum.

The Indian War Memorial Museum is housed in the first and second storeys of Naubat Khānā or the Naqqār Khānā inside the Red Fort. The museum was established as a tribute to the innumerable Indian soldiers who fought in the two World Wars on behalf of the British, both in India as well as abroad. As expected the major objects displayed here are different kinds of armaments that were used in the wars: arrows, swords, *khukris*, revolvers, machine guns, shells, bomb fuses, shells, models of pistols, bullets, gun powder flasks, etc. Uniforms of different armies are also on display here.

The Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya is located in one of the barracks which were built by the British within the Red Fort complex. As the name suggests the museum showcases the struggle for freedom from the pre-1857 days till 15 August, 1947. The museum has on its display photographs, documents, paintings, lithographs and objects like guns, pistols, swords, shields, badges, medals, dioramas, sculptures, etc.

The Swatantrata Senani Museum is located in one of the military barracks in the adjoining Salimgarh fort. This incomplete fort was built by Islām Shāh Sūr, son and successor of Sher Shāh Sūr. The barracks which were used by the British to imprison the soldiers of the Indian National Army during their historic trial in the Red Fort now serve as the museum. The galleries display the personal memorabilia of the INA soldiers like the INA uniform worn by Colonel Prem Kumar, riding boots and coat buttons of Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, photographs of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, etc. Another gallery displays the antiquities found during excavations carried out within the Fort.

vi. Bijapur Museum, Karnataka

The city of Bijapur, capital of the Ādil Shāhīs, is full of Medieval Islamic architecture, largely dominated by the mosques, tombs and palaces. The museum was established in the Naqqār Khānā (Trumpet House) of the Gol Gumbaz complex. The collection includes stone inscriptions in Arabic, Persian, Kannada, Sanskrit and Urdu manuscripts, arms and weapons, metal wares, chinaware, wood carvings, maps and valuable ancient carpets, Brāhmanical and Jaina sculptures found from Bijapur and its neighbourhood.

vii. Halebid Museum, Karnataka

The Halebid Museum is located within the precincts of a temple built under the aegis of the Hoysalas of Mysore. The museum houses stone and metal sculptures, architectural members, inscriptions of historical significance retrieved from in and around Halebid. Sculptures and architectural pieces are displayed in this open-air museum. The sculptures in this museum are of such fine craftsmanship that they have been taken for exhibitions in many foreign countries.

viii. Hampi Museum, Karnataka

Hampi, now a small village, was once the imperial capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. The history of Hampi however goes back to Neolithic / Chalcolithic times. Hampi has been declared as a World Heritage Site owing to the grandeur of its Medieval city, dignified even in its ruins. The museum, located in a modern building in the village of Kamalapur, is home to one of the richest antiquarian treasures ranging in date from the Prehistoric to the Medieval period. The objects on display include Prehistoric and Protohistoric antiquities, stone sculptures of Brahmanical deities, stucco figurines, hero-stones and *satī*-stones, and other minor antiquities discovered during the course of excavations. The miniature scale model of the entire Hampi valley in the central courtyard is

novel feature and goes a long way in better understanding of the ancient settlement. Another notable feature of the museum is the information kiosk set up in one of the galleries.

ix. Tipu Sultan Museum, Srirangapatnam, Karnataka

The Tipu Sultan Museum at Srirangapatnam is housed in the Daria Daulat Bagh, a monument of national importance in its own right. Haider Ali's son Ṭīpu Sulṭān is famous for his heroic wars with British. Objects connected with the history of Haider Ali and his son Ṭīpu Sulṭān and their times are now housed in this museum. The objects on display includes oil paintings, pencil sketches, aquatints and engravings, coins and medals, costumes, furniture, arms, etc. The paintings, sketches and aquatints are the pictorial representations of actual historical events connected with the life of Ṭīpu Sulṭān and his immediate family.

x. Mattancherry Palace Museum, Kerala

The Mattancherry Palace, built around AD 1555 by the Portuguese, represents a fine blend of Indo-European architecture. The palace was converted into a museum in 1985 and houses, among other things, portraits of the Cochin kings, palanquins, ceremonial dresses of the kings, swords, daggers, axes, ceremonial spears, royal umbrellas, canopy, *dolis*, swords, stamps and coins, etc. Apart from the displayed objects the Palace is also notable for its mural paintings depicting the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes, Purāṇic legends and themes from contemporary vernacular literature.

xi. Khajuraho Museum, Madhya Pradesh

Khajuraho, the celebrated temple town of central India, was the capital of the Chandellas during the tenth to eleventh centuries AD. Many of these temples are well-preserved and renowned for their rich and varied sculptural pieces. The dismembered architectural and sculptural specimens are the main source of the museum collection. The museum was established in the year 1910 and has about two thousand sculptures and architectural pieces representing three principal faiths, i.e., Buddhist, Brāhmaṇical and Jaina, all belonging to the tenth–twelfth centuries. Some of them are recognized as masterpieces of Medieval art.

xii. Sanchi Museum, Madhya Pradesh

Sanchi, near Bhopal, is one of the most famous Buddhist sites in central India and a major tourist attraction. The site was a flourishing Buddhist settlement teeming with several *stūpas*, temples and monasteries dating from the Mauryan to the Medieval periods. The museum was established here by Sir John Marshall in 1919 to display the different categories of objects found from Sanchi and its vicinity. An Aśokan lion-capital, identical to the one at Sarnath, fragments of gateway and railings,

monastic and household utensils of iron, copper and bronze and also casts of a few relic-caskets, besides a number of carvings from the Mauryan to the Medieval times are the important antiquities which are displayed in the museum.

xiii. Konarak Museum, Odisha

The Archaeological Museum, Konarak is located on the northern side of the famous Sun Temple, a World Heritage monument. It comprises of four galleries that exhibit nearly two hundred and sixty antiquities, gathered from within the Temple complex. Besides, it has a rich reserve collection. The notable objects on display are an image of Sūrya in sandstone, king Narasimha in discussion, marriage scenes, the various incarnations of Viṣṇu in chlorite stone; the reconstructed wheel, *dikpāls* and celestial nymphs, the gigantic head of a crocodile, stone carvings of flora and fauna, celestial nymphs, sculpture of Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa, *Gaja-vyāla*, some erotic figures, *śālabhañjikās*, etc. that exude superb Odishan craftsmanship.

xiv. Fort St. George Museum, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

The records and antiquities in this museum, established in the year 1948, offers scope for the study of the growth of Fort St. George, Madras, the first British settlement in India, in particular, and early Indo-British history, in general. The museum has on display arms, manuscripts, paintings, prints, coins, medals, textiles, porcelain, silverware from churches, marble sculptures, etc., of that period.

xv. Sarnath Museum, Uttar Pradesh

Sarnath, the site where Buddha preached his first sermon, is a place of great sanctity and also holds the distinction of having the first site museum of the ASI in the country. Antiquities in this museum represent the works of art of the Maurya, the Śūṅga, the Kushan, the Gupta and the Medieval periods. The pride of place is occupied by the 2 m high lion-capital of Aśoka (Pl. 78A), the state emblem of India. Among the notable sculptures are the colossal standing Bodhisattva of the Mathura school belonging to the reign of Kanishka and the Buddha in *dharmachakrapravartana mudrā*, which stands as a testimony to the genius of Gupta art tradition. Other objects on display are Buddha in different attitudes, other Buddhist deities like Mañjuśrī, Tārā, Padmapāṇi, Vajrasattva, Nilakaṇṭha Lokeśvara, Maitreya; Brāhmaṇical gods and goddesses, *yakshas* and some secular objects like figures of birds, animals, male and female heads as well as some stucco figures.

xvi. Hazarduari Palace Museum, Murshidabad, West Bengal

This museum is located in the Hazarduari Palace in Murshidabad. The palace was built during the reign of Nawāb Nāzim Humāyun Jah (AD 1824–1838) by the famous architect McLeod Duncan

in Greek (Doric) style. The palace owes its name to the more than thousand real and false doors enclosing vast corridors within.

The museum, established in 1985, is regarded as one of the biggest site museums under the ASI. It has 20 display galleries containing 1034 antiquities and art objects. The total collection of antiquities and art objects numbering 4742 includes various weapons, oil paintings of Dutch, French and Italian artists, marble statues, a silver throne (Pl. 78B) and other metal objects, porcelain and stucco statues, *farmans*, rare books, old maps, manuscripts, land revenue records and palanquin mostly belonging to eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

D. Anthropological Site Museums

There are a few site museums under the Anthropological Survey of India also. They deal with ethnographical materials of different kinds. The representations of various ethnic groups, their society, customs, traditions, art and culture are the major presentations in these museums. The Central Anthropological Museum, attached to the Survey's headquarters at Kolkata is one of the excellent site museum of its kind.

In addition to the Central Museum at Kolkata, the Survey has Zonal Anthropological Museums at six regional centres and one at a sub-regional centre. The sub-regional centre museum is at Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh. The six regional centres having museums are Port Blair (Andaman and Nicobar islands), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Dehradun (Uttaranchal), Shillong (Meghalaya), Udaipur (Rajasthan) and Mysore (Karnataka).

E. Memorial Museums

i. Gandhi Memorial Museum, New Delhi

The Gandhi Samarak Sangrahalaya (Gandhi Memorial Museum), founded in 1949, commemorates Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to the freedom struggle and towards nation-building. The exhibition consists of a few of the objects he used, or replicas of them, photographs of events of his life, collections of his writings and books about him. The Memorial's collections are more for the demonstration and teaching of his ideals than museum exhibits. It is appropriate that this type of personalia commemorative museum, dedicated to the Father of the Nation, should be located in the capital.

The origin of this museum goes back to the period soon after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on the fateful evening of January 30, 1948, when the slow process of scouting for, collecting and preserving his personal relics, manuscripts, books, journals and documents, photographic and audio-visual material, all that could go into a museum on the life, philosophy and work of Gandhiji – began in an unostentatious way in Mumbai. Later the work was shifted to Delhi and in early 1951 the nucleus of a museum on Gandhiji was set up in government hutments adjoining Kota House. Later still, in mid-1957, it was shifted to the picturesque old mansion at 5 Mansingh Road.

It was finally brought to its present and permanent home, most appropriately built opposite the *Samādhi* of Mahatma Gandhi – free India's most revered place of pilgrimage – at Rajghat, New Delhi, in 1959. The imposing two storey museum was formally inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, on January 30, 1961. The museum was named Gandhi Memorial Museum (Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya), now commonly known as 'National Gandhi Museum' (Rashtriya Gandhi Sangrahalaya) as there are also a number of regional Gandhi Memorial Museums in India.

ii. Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi

The Nehru Memorial Museum was opened to the public in 1964 in a part of the Teen Murti Bhawan, the former official residence of the late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Some rooms are preserved as they were used by him and the permanent exhibitions display items associated with his personal and public life.

Temporary exhibitions of manuscripts, documents and photographs are also presented from time to time. Pandit Nehru's contributions to India's struggle for Independence and his leadership during the first seventeen critical years after independence gives to his official residence as Prime Minister the importance of a shrine as well as of a museum.

Conscious of the fact that an understanding of the spirit and method of science was crucial for children to become responsible citizens, Nehru pursued every opportunity to impart scientific knowledge. In 1964, the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund was set up to promote his ideas and subsequently it undertook to build the Nehru Planetarium with its primary aim being the promotion of astronomy. Nehru Planetarium is now a wing of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

F. University Museums

Most universities have small teaching museums attached to the various departments. Since these are intended for students they are not much concerned with questions of installation and public education.

There are, however, a few exceptions to this rule: Archaeology Museum attached to the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune, the archaeology museum at the University of Baroda, the Kausambi Museum at the University of Allahabad, the Asutosh Museum at Calcutta University and the Bharat Kala Bhavan at the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

These university museums are notable for they cater to a wide section of the population rather than being limited to the respective university students alone. The Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta, ranks among the most important and prestigious museums within the city of Kolkata and the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, although it is located within the university premises, some distance away from the city and thus often overlooked, is the only museum in the ancient city of Varanasi. The contents of some of these museums are described below:

i. Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, University of Calcutta, Kolkata

The museum houses in its collection some of the materials recovered from excavations at Paharpur, Mahasthangarh and Rangamati and the entire collection of antiquities from Bangarh and Chandraketugarh.

It has a large and varied collection of sculptures belonging to the Pala period, besides terracottas (Pl. 79A) from the early sites of West Bengal, Mathura and other places, bronzes, coins, miniatures from Nepal, palm-leaf manuscripts, inscriptions and wooden objects, etc. University of Calcutta offers post-graduate degree in archaeology as well as museology.

ii. Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

This museum was originally a private collection, transferred to the University in 1950. The museum's collection covers Indian sculptures, paintings, textiles, jewellery, coins, manuscripts, etc. Some of the outstanding examples of Indian art are to be seen here (Pl. 79B). The excellence and importance of its collection in all fields of Indian art places it among the leading museums of India.

A major part of the museum collection is the endeavour of Padma Vibhushan Late Rai Krishnadasa, who donated his entire collection to the University. The museum offers post-graduate courses in Indian art, and arranges lectures and special programmes for which the cultural leaders of the community and the University are invited.

It is a research centre of high standing and a focus for Indian art studies, especially of miniature paintings.

iii. Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute Museum, Pune

The Archaeological Museum was added to the Department of Archaeology in order to house the growing collection of antiquarian remains retrieved through explorations and excavations from different parts of peninsular India.

From a humble beginning the museum has grown from strength to strength and currently has ten galleries. The artefacts displayed in these galleries tell the story of human evolution from Prehistoric to the Medieval period.

The objects on display cover a wide span of time and include Stone Age tools and animal fossils, excavated materials from Chalcolithic sites like Navdatoli, Maheswar, Jorwe, Nasik, Nevasa, Ahar, Kayatha and Kuntasi, copper and iron objects from Megalithic sites like Naikund, Mahurjhari, Bargaon, Khairwada and Bhagimohari antiquities of early historic sites, such as Maheshwar, Dwarka, Nasik, Nevasa, Kahali-Brahmapuri, Bhon, Paturda, Siddhapur, Chaul and Junnar, a few sculptural pieces, estampages of inscriptions and coins, etc.

The notable galleries in this museum are the H. D. Sankalia Memorial Gallery, Science in Archaeology Gallery and Ethnoarchaeology Gallery.

G. Specialized Museums Run by Departments of Central and State Governments

i. National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

The National Gallery of Modern Art was founded in 1953 to carry on the collection and exhibition of Indian art from 1857 (year which marks the end of many of the National Museum's collections) up to the present. It is installed in the Jaipur House, formerly a residence, a building of spacious proportions which has been adapted quite successfully for exhibition and general museum purposes.

The greater part of the National Gallery's permanent collection and the occasional temporary exhibitions are of the paintings, framed and glazed graphic works and sculptures. A few examples of decorative arts and of miniatures illustrating the tradition of Indian art and the transition to modern schools are also exhibited. This is valuable for further researches in this field. Such comparative material provide a glimpse of the synthesis achieved by the Indian artists in using western techniques and styles while still maintaining a link with the Indian art traditions of the past.

The most important part of the exhibition, however, are the modern paintings and sculptures by Indian artists (Pl. 80), which present minimum problems for exhibition. Pleasant backgrounds, ample space and unobtrusive frames and pedestals are all that is needed and the National Gallery has given careful attention to these aspects of its exhibitions.

The galleries have been arranged in a more or less chronological order to give some idea of the evolution of Indian art. This is important, for most Indians know little about the part played in the development of contemporary Indian art by the early schools like that of Calcutta, or of the Indian painters who were pioneers in adopting western styles. The Gallery arranges lecture programmes on modern art and occasional special exhibitions; it has a publication division and a good reference library on modern art.

ii. Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal

National Museum of Mankind is located on the Shamlia Hills in Bhopal. It was established in the year 1974. The museum has a huge and rare collection of tribal and folk arts from across India. The one-of-its-kind museum is situated on a Prehistoric site and may be the only museum in the world scattered with numerous Prehistoric painted rock shelters. It is maintained by the folk and tribal communities.

This unique museum occupies 200 acres of land and has both open-air exhibitions and indoor galleries. The open-air exhibits showcase Tribal Habitat, Coastal Village, Desert Village, Himalayan Village, Mythological Trail and Traditional Technology Park. They are all life-size exhibits constructed of the same materials as used by different population groups.

Various medicinal plants which are used by the tribal people have been grown here on the ground. Apart from that the museum contains various anthropological and ethnographic objects displayed in ten indoor galleries. The library of the museum has audio-visual archives and a computerized documentation system while its collection of ethnographic examples are among the best in the world.

iii. National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum (Crafts Museum), New Delhi

The core collection of the Crafts Museum was assembled in the first two decades after Independence to serve as reference material for the craftsmen whose hereditary traditions were fading in the face of stiff competition from industrialization. The museum has recreated a village complex in such a way as to simulate the experience of walking along a village road surrounded by quaint village houses, having sloping tiled roofs, carved wooden *jharokhās*, open courtyards with small pigeon houses, domestic shrine for *tulsī*, façades of *havelīs*, temple chariots, etc.

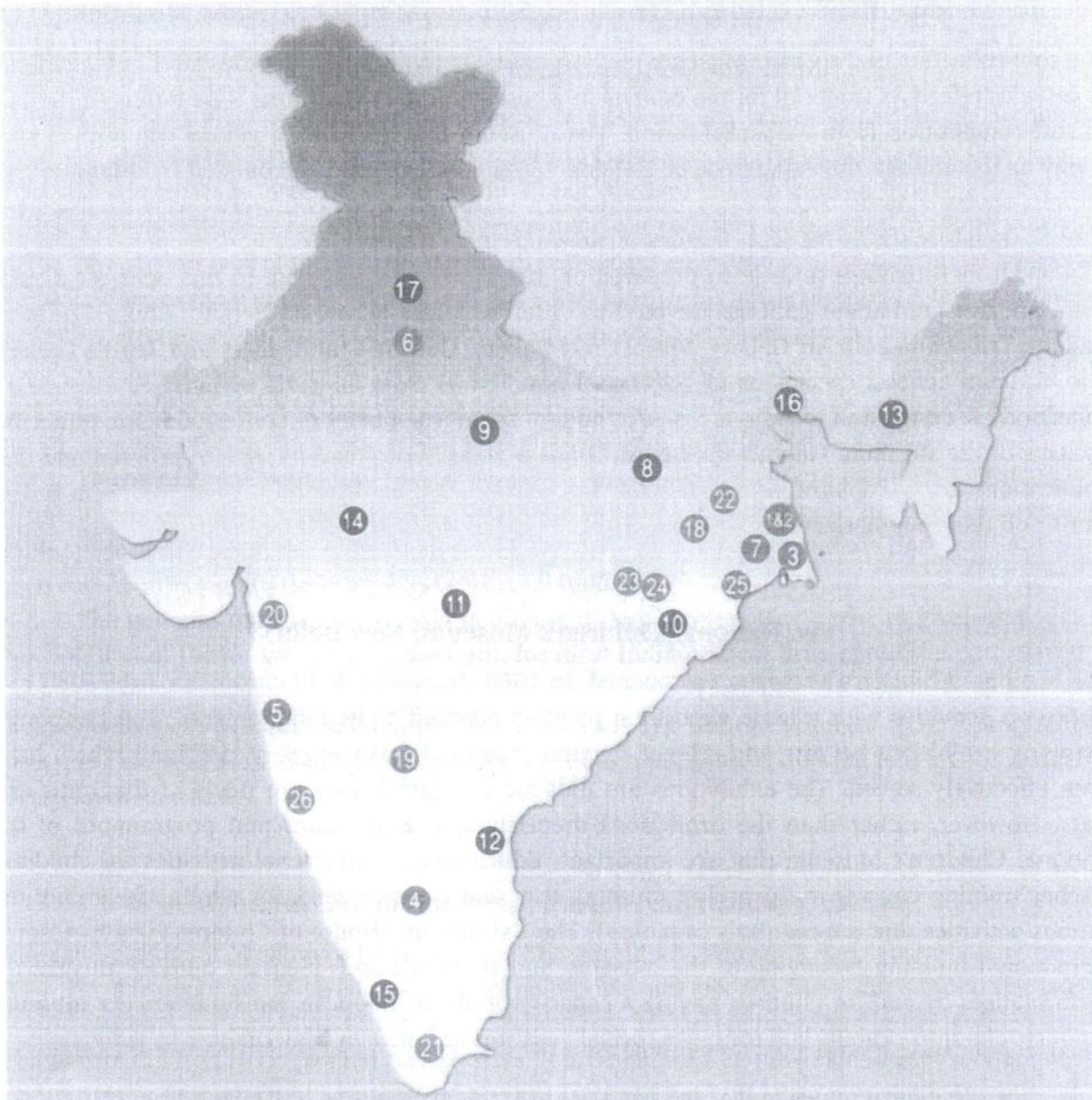
All the buildings have been prepared on actual sizes. In addition, to this open-air display there are five permanent galleries devoted to different forms of arts and crafts: Bhuta Sculpture Gallery, Tribal and Folk Art Gallery, Ritual Craft Gallery, Courtly Craft Gallery and Textile Gallery. The museum collects specimens of traditional handicrafts from all parts of India as a reference collection for design and technique research and for the development of craft production under the projects of the All India Handicrafts Board. It has a good library and its lecture programmes and publications, both monographs and popular works, are valuable contributions to studies in Indian crafts and their popularization.

iv. National Children's Museum, New Delhi

The National Children's Museum was opened, in 1962, in provisional quarters for exhibition and workshop activities with a large exposition pavilion adapted to its requirements. The temporary changing exhibitions on arts and science invariably present fresh series of problems which have been effectively solved. The exhibitions are didactic and lavish uses are made of diagrams and texts. However, rather than the exhibitions themselves, it is the aims and programmes of the National Children's Museum that are important. Educational, recreational activities for children, teacher training courses in art and in museum use, and creative work for adults are among the various activities that are regularly organized. The Bal Bhavan (House of Children) is a handsome recreational building belonging to the museum and there is also a pleasant outdoor theatre for performances by and for children having a capacity of about 3,000. In the summers the museum conducts children's camps and arranges special vacation activities in New Delhi.

v. National Rail Museum, New Delhi

The National Rail Museum was established in 1977 under the Ministry of Railways, Government of India and is the only museum of its kind in India. It has both open-air and indoor displays. It has on display the world's oldest operational steam engine the Fairy Queen (1855), the Patiala Monorail Railway (1907-27) – a unique exhibit that works on the single rail system, the Prince of Wales Saloon (1875), the luxuriously decorated Mysore Maharaja Saloon, the Viceregal Dining Car, etc., and a number of oddities such as the skull of an elephant that had charged into a mail train in 1894. Besides, there are many other novelties of the Indian Railways which are exhibited here.



National Level

1. National Council of Science Museums, Kolkata
2. Central Research and Training Laboratory, Kolkata
3. Birla Industrial and Technological Museum, Kolkata
4. Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum, Bangalore
5. Nehru Science Centre, Mumbai
6. National Science Centre, Delhi
7. Science City, Kolkata

Regional Level

8. Shrikrishna Science Centre, Patna
9. Regional Science City, Lucknow
10. Regional Science Centre, Bhubaneswar
11. Raman Science Centre and Planetarium, Nagpur
12. Regional Science Centre, Tirupati
13. Regional Science Centre, Guwahati
14. Regional Science Centre, Bhopal
15. Regional Science Centre and Planetarium, Calicut
16. North Bengal Science Centre, Siliguri
17. Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre, Kurukshetra

Sub-regional Level

18. District Science Centre, Purulia
19. District Science Centre, Gulbarga
20. District Science Centre, Dharampur
21. District Science Centre, Tirunelveli
22. Bardhaman Science Centre
23. Dhenkanal Science Centre
24. Kapilas Science Park
25. Digha Science Centre and National Science Camp
26. Goa Science Centre

FIG 2 Distribution of museums under NCSM (Courtesy: NCSM)

H. Science and Technology Museums

i. The National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)

The NCSM is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It is the largest network of science centres / museums under a single administrative umbrella in the world. There are twenty-seven science centres or museums and one Research and Development Laboratory and Training Centre located in different parts of India. The museums or centres had about 8.5 million visitors during the financial year 2009–2010.

The NCSM provides support to other organizations for running science centres (thirteen in number) within the country. There are about eleven centres all over the country which are coming up in near future. The Council has developed several galleries and museums in close collaboration with other government and corporate bodies. The National Agricultural Science Museum, Delhi, and the ONGC Golden Jubilee Museum are two such collaborative projects developed by the NCSM. Among the museums under the network of NCSM, Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (Kolkata), Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum (Bangalore), Nehru Science Centre (Mumbai), Shrikrishna Science Centre (Patna), National Science Centre (Delhi), Regional Science Centre (Bhubaneswar), Science City (Kolkata), Regional Science Centre (Guwahati), Regional Science Centre and Planetarium (Calicut), Goa Science Centre (Goa), etc. are most noteworthy due to the collection, innovative presentations and educational programmes.

I. Museums Run by Societies / Trusts and Private Bodies

i. Asiatic Society Museum, Kolkata

The Museum of the Asiatic Society was founded in 1814 under the curatorship of N. Wallich. The rapid growth of its collection is evident from its first catalogue, published in 1849. When the Indian Museum, Calcutta was established in 1814, the Society handed over most of its valuable collections to the new museum. The Asiatic Society, however, still has a museum of its own which possesses precious and select collection of oil paintings, besides stone and copperplate inscriptions, coins, sculptures, manuscripts and archival records ranging from the third century BCE to the eighteenth century CE. The most notable among its collection is the Bairat Rock Edict of Aśoka (c. 250 BC). Some masterpieces, like Joshua Reynolds' *Cupid asleep on Cloud*, Guido Cagnacci's *Cleopatra*, Thomas Daniell's *A Ghat at Benares* and Peter Paul Rubens' *Infant Christ* are also in the possession of this museum.

ii. Kannada Research Institute Museum, Dharwad

Kannada Research Institute Museum, Dharwad, was established inside the University of Karnataka in 1939. It has a large collection of Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina images in stone and metal, inscriptions from Karnataka, coins, paintings, manuscripts and Prehistoric antiquities.

iii. Bhartiya Itihasa Samsodhak Mandal Museum, Pune

The museum has a notably large collection of maps, documents and manuscripts, besides coins, paintings, and a few sculptures all of historical and cultural importance, particularly to the Maratha history. Excavated materials from Karad, north Satara, and surface finds from Nasik are also housed here.

J. Private Museums

Many private museums are maintained by educational societies, religious and memorial trusts and even by private persons. Of these, the Maharaja of Jaipur's Museum is by far the most important. It is a trust established by the former ruler to administer the exhibitions from his collections of miniatures, manuscripts, seventeenth-century rugs, arms and armour, textiles and costumes that are displayed most attractively in several different buildings. A unique feature of the Maharaja of Jaipur's Museum is the complete documentation of each object in the collection. They came to the museum from the former ruler's storehouses, where materials of every kind, accumulated over the centuries, were kept with care. Each item acquired and stored was entered in a register, with full particulars of its fabrication or acquisition. The collections of the Jaipur Museum constitute, therefore, an invaluable record for comparison and reference in dealing with similar material in other Indian collections for which frequently there is no documentation at all. Similar trusts have been established by other former rulers and their families, and a number of museums housing the collections of such families will offer for visitors to India an added attraction quite different from that of the archaeological heritage to be seen in the state and site museums.

At Ramnagar, near Varanasi, on the opposite bank of the Ganga, a private museum was opened in a part of the Palace of the Maharaja of Benaras where exhibits from the ancestral collection are displayed. The collection is notable for objects belonging to the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, including elephant *howdahs* finely worked in ivory, silver, gold and other precious materials used in the religious festivals for which Ramnagar is famous.

3. CONCLUSION

Museums are no longer just *ajāyabghara* – storehouses of curios housed in old grey buildings. They have the potential to be a living emblem of our rich and varied heritage provided we create the right environment for them to flourish. Museums are institutions which can help people increase their power of observation in order to look beyond the diversities that characterize all the creations of nature as well as of man and derive knowledge and pleasure from the same. Though people in India hail from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, they are not in the least lacking in the basic curiosity about life and matters around them. Museums which disseminate information through visual and oral means can be turned into very useful instruments for elevating awareness among the masses of the significance of all matter of existence.

At one stage, even when they had existed for long, museums were held as mere storehouses of antiquities and collections of objects of interest. The old concept of museums has been long abandoned and museums have come to be recognized as institutions of considerable importance, encompassing ideas and information of a wide variety to be gained through an easily comprehensible manner. Since museums have come to be developed and maintained at the expense of public resources, it is an absolute necessity that museums should deem it their imperative duty to devise means and ways to discharge their responsibility towards the society at large. Museums undoubtedly carry a great fascination for common people. Their presentations should be such that they cater equally to populations with diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. They should be easily comprehensible to a common layman as well as to a scholar. Museums can play a very pivotal role towards revitalizing and rejuvenating society at large, particularly in the fields of culture and education.

Since Independence, the nation has faced many vital problems posing great threat and hindrances to its progress and development, of which the problem of integration stands out as a major one. Extending from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean, India is a land of wide diversities; but there has been a strong undercurrent of unity in spirit and understanding, underlying the consciousness of the people which has sustained this civilization and culture through the ages. The museums, through judicious planning and creative imagination can bring about a considerable awareness among the visitors about this rich heritage of identity and homogeneity which exist throughout the country.

The role of museums should not be confined to mere collection, preservation and display of the exhibits; they should be developed into living organs of society, providing participation and leadership in solving problems that confront the nation. If we achieve this goal, the people will also find real interest in the affairs of museums and they will emerge as real instruments in the service of the society.

N. R. Banerjee in his Presidential address at the All India Museum Conference (1977) held at Bangalore remarked, 'I conclude with the expression of a strong faith in the integrated and coordinated growth of the museum movement in the country in all ramification and in all disciplines so that museums of all categories and disciplines can effectively serve their role of the preserver of our cultural, historical, scientific and technological heritage for the education, recreation and delight of one and all, young and old, the educated and the non-literate alike'. I, too, strongly believe that here is an ideal worth striving for.

Endnotes

1. There are seven hundred and forty-eight museums in the country of different kinds (Agrawal 2009). The present paper only deals with some important ones belonging to different categories.
2. Aihole, Amravati, Badami, Bijapur, Bodhgaya, Chanderi, Chandragiri, Deeg Palace, Fatehpur Sikri, Fort St. George, Gwalior, Hampi, Halebidu, Hazarduari Palace, Jageswar, Kalibangan, Kangra Fort, Koch Bihar Palace, Konarak, Kondapur, Khajuraho, Lothal, Lucknow, Mattancherry Palace, Nagarjunakonda, Nalanda, Purana Qila, Ratnagiri, Red Fort (4), Ropar, Sarnath, Sanchi, Srirangapatnam, Surya Pahar, Taj Mahal, Thanesar, Tamluk, Vaishali, Velha Goa, Vikramshila.

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