

## Development of Museums In India

The development of the museums in India is very recent. With regard to the development of Museum-movement in India, there are five major factors which helped the growth of museums and the museum – movement in India.

- Firstly the British Civil Servants in India, who had seen museum movement in their own country, encouraged the Indians with an enthusiastic lead.
- Secondly, the support given by the princely states of India.
- Thirdly the collections of the learned, philanthropic societies were donated to form the nucleus of big museums.
- Fourthly, the emergence of Archaeological Survey of India strengthened the museum movement by opening site museums at a number of excavated sites and
- Lastly, the contribution of Lord Curzon and John Marshall.

The development of Museums in India can be divided into five distinct phases of growth as follows :

Formative Phase (under Colonial Rulers) 1796 – 1858

- Second Phase (The Victoria era) 1858-1899
- Third Phase (the era of Lord Curzon and John Marshall) 1899-1928
- Fourth Phase (pre Independence era) 1928 – 1947
- Fifth Phase (post Independence era) 1947 – 2017

Formative Phase (Under Colonial Rulers) 1796-1858

When the British colonized the Indian subcontinent in the 18th century, the European idea of the museum percolated to India. The early phase of the Museums in India began with the endeavors of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, founded by Sir William Jones, Orientalist and Judge of Supreme court in Calcutta under the patronage of Warren Hastings, the Governor General of India. After seeing the rich cultural heritage of India on 15th Feb, 1784, the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta was formed for promoting Oriental research. The purpose of the society was to promote deep and wide knowledge of the country history, culture, religions,

geography and natural resources for posterity within the geographical limits of Asia. The intellectuals with antiquarian zeal while assiduously endeavoring Indological research had also collected archaeological, ethnological, geological and zoological objects in large numbers which they donated to the society. A need therefore was felt to house these varied objects at a suitable place for their reception and preservation and it thus souted the seeds of museums in India

In 1796, the proposal found ready acceptance with the members of the society and it was determined to establish Society Museum at the premises of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Thus India's first museum was set up at Asiatic Society, 1 Park Street, Calcutta in 1814 which lit the lamp of the " Museum movement in India". The museum was established with two sections -

- Archaeological and Ethnological
- Geological and Zoological

Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish Botanist was appointed as Honorary Curator of the Oriental Museum of the Asiatic Society. Under his curatorship this museum remained as of natural history objects. The East India Company itself had keen interest in geology and natural wealth of India due to economic factors. In 1840 a museum of Economic Geology was founded by Dr Helfer and other scientific officers in Calcutta and it remained in the premises of the Asiatic society till 1856. In 1837, James Prinsep, secretary of the society proposed for the establishment of a National Museum in India, but he could not receive positive response from the company government. After the establishment of the Indian Museum in Kolkata, many museums originated in different parts of India to house the curiosities.

Indian museum movement also spread to Madras in the first quarter of 19th century. Madras Literary Society was established in the year 1812. The society established museum of economic geology at Madras in 1828. In 1830 it became an Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. The 'Government Museum and National Art Gallery' at Madras was set up by the Madras Literary Society in 1851 at the College of Fort St. George; six local museums at Bellary, Cuddalore, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Ootacamund and Rajahmundry were also established at the end of 1856.

These examples set by two above societies proved a great incentive and many more new museums in different parts of the country were opened. The Victoria museum, Karachi (now in Pakistan in the North-west), and Trivandrum Museum in South

India were established in 1851 and 1857, respectively. The Victoria and Albert Museum was originally established in 1855 in Mumbai. During this time, the museum was used as a treasure house of the decorative and industrial arts. The construction of the present building was completed in 1871 and the museum was opened in 1872. The museum is presently known as 'Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum'. By the year 1857, there were 12 Museums in the whole of the Indian Peninsula.

The museum movement, therefore, progressed very slowly and not as a result of any deliberate educational policy to utilize them for the purpose until many years later. The motivation had, therefore, to be provided by the government of the day or the learned societies, which were burdened with their collections of manuscripts, handicrafts and the like and felt morally responsible for housing and preserving them for posterity.

#### Second Phase (The Victoria era) 1858-1899

After the first war of Indian Independence, 1857, the parliament of England took the administration of India from East India Company. So the progress of Indian museum movement was hampered for a short period. But it got a momentum when the Government of India accepted in principle to give all encouragement to build up the History of Indian sub continent. The year 1861 witnessed the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Alexander Cunningham was appointed as the First Director General of Archaeological Survey of India. The tireless efforts of the Director Cunningham, led to the discovery of large quantity of Archaeological Materials. These found their way into the nearest extant Provincial Museums or to the Asiatic Society Museum.

By this time the collections of the Oriental Museum of the Asiatic Society in Bengal had become enormous. Therefore the society made another attempt for the creation of an Imperial Museum in Calcutta with the cost of the state. It was however, in 1866, that the govt. agreed to rename society museum as the Indian Museum, under the newly passed Indian Museum Act of 1866, and left the management to a Board of trustees. This museum was opened to the public on April 1, 1878. It was the first public museum established with varied collections with vivid representation in India with govt. support .

About half a dozen museums grew up during the first two decades of the Second Phase (1858-1878). The Museums at Luknow and Nagpur were established in 1863 and after one year in 1864 Lahore Museum was established. The most remarkable is

the Govt. Museum at Mathura (1874) built around the nucleus of large collections of Mathura Sculptures.

Queen Victoria declared that, all the steps should be taken to preserve the vast, vivid, cultural heritage of the country and all the help would be given to build the history of the subcontinent. As a result, the Treasure Trove Act (T.T. Act of 1878) was passed during the reign of Lord Lytton by authorizing the Government to claim the possession of any treasure unearthed that exceeded ten rupees in value.

The Celebration of the Golden and Diamond Jubilee years of Queen Victoria in 1887 and 1897 ushered in a new era of the rise of several new Museums often associated with her name not only in India but also in other parts of British Empire.

During this period, the princely states of India also established number of Museums in their respective principalities as part of the state's educational and cultural dissemination. The Albert Hall of Jaipur was established in the year 1887. The building itself became an integral part of the display, its Indo-saracenic architecture and stone ornamentation, became a source of reference for varied classical Indian styles of design from Mughal to Rajput. The Albert Hall became a centre for imparting knowledge of history of civilizations, inspiring artisans to improve their skills, and preserving & developing traditional Indian arts, crafts and architectural forms. In the same year Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III set up a museum at Baroda as a centre of Non-formal education. His foresight and taste were responsible for the museum's unique and varied collection. During the second phase 24 museums were established.

Third Phase (the era of Lord Curzon and John Marshall) 1899-1928

The dawn of the 20th century was an era of awakening and great reforms. As far as the history of colonial museums in India is concerned, the most important name is Lord Curzon who came to India as Governor General in 1899. He realized the chaotic condition of Indian Archaeology without any central leadership and felt very strongly that the British government in India was doing little for the preservation of cultural heritage of the country. The great impetus for the museum movement in the country was in fact started during the Viceroy of the Lord Curzon when special emphasize was given to the preservation of Art objects and the study of Archaeology. He proposed to the British Government the revival of the post of Director General for supervision the work of the archaeological surveyors. As a result the British Government having accepted the proposals, John Marshall was

appointed as the Director General of the reconstituted Archaeological Survey of India in 1902 at the age of twenty six.

With the appointment of John Marshall the conservation and exploration were simultaneously pushed ahead during this phase, Marshall was responsible for setting up a large number of site museums in India under the direct control of the Archaeological Survey of India. Sarnath is the first site museum of the Archaeological Survey of India, created at the place where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon (Dharma Chakra Pravarthana). In order to preserve the antiquities found from this site, a decision was taken in 1904 by the Government to construct a site museum adjacent to the excavated site at Sarnath. The building was completed in 1910 to house, display and study the antiquities.

During this phase of Indian museum movement John Marshall exposed for the first time in India well preserved remains of houses, shops and streets, dating back the Mauryan period and recovered valuable antiquities which help us to reconstruct everyday life of the town people of those early days.

With the efforts of Lord Curzon and John Marshall several site museums were established in the places including those at Agra(1906), Delhi fort(1909), Lahore fort, and an excavated sites of Ajmer(1908), Chamba(1909), Jodhpur(1909), Gwalior(1910), Khajuraho(1910), Nalanda(1917), Taxila(1918), Sanchi (1919), Mohenjodaro, Harrapa(1926) and Dhakka (now in Bangladesh) (1931) etc. Thus 1902 onwards a historical movement was already started in building up of both local and site museums encouraged by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Museum movement in India was not only guided by the cultural renaissance of the 19th century, but also by the political awakening of the initial years of the 20th century. Enlightened Indians like Bhau Daji, Pandit Hariprasad Sastri, T.N. Mukharjee, Pandit Radhakrishna, Gangadhar Ganguli, Sarat Chandra Roy, Neilmani Chakravarthi, and D.R. Bhandarkar worked hard to the development of the Indian museums.

The educated Indians also showed great interest in showcasing of industrial arts and their use as educational tools. In 1900, some prominent citizens of Allahabad including Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Sir Sunderlal pleaded for opening of an industrial and educational museum at Allahabad together with a Zoological wing.

The museum movement in India was further influenced by the Swadesi movement. The museum movement took a new leap when the learned and research societies

commissioned museums in their institutions. Several learned societies such as the Bangiya Sahitya parishad Calcutta (1910), and Bharatiya Itihas Samsodhak Mandal, Pune(1910), Andhra Historical Research Society, Rajamundry (1928) and Rajwade Sanshodhan Mandal Pune (1932) opened the regional heritage museums in their institutions.

Another historical event of the First quarter of 20th century was the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to India. In 1905, the people of Bombay decided to set up a museum as a tribute to the visit of the prince of Wales and sir Currimbhoy – Ibrahim and Sir Cowasji Jehangir contributed rupees 300,000 and 50,000 respectively for the grand prince of Wales museum. The museum was completed in 1914 and was handed over to the Board of Trustees in 1921, now called the Chatrapathi Shivaji Maharaj Vasthu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS),

In the year 1911 Dr. J. Ph. Vogel prepared the first Directory of Indian Museums, which gives detailed information relating to each of the museums which were then thirty nine in number.

Fourth Phase (pre Independence era) 1928 – 1947

During this phase one of the important Museums set up by the Archaeological Survey of India was the Central Asian antiquities museum in 1929 at New Delhi to house the excavated remains gathered by Sir Aurel Stien, a Hungarian officer of the ASI. His reputation rests on three lengthy trips he made between 1900 and 1920 to Chinese Turkestan. He collected and excavated nearly 11,000 art and archaeological objects. It is now part and parcel of the National museum, but constitutes one of the world's six great collections of Central Asian Antiquities.

Likewise many museums came up under the Aegis of the civic and corporate bodies, the Allahabad Municipal Museum, Alahabad (1931), Temple committee's museum at Srirangam (1935), the Asutosh Museum of Fine Arts, university of Calcutta(1937), the Museum movement has made considerable progress upto 1936.

In the year 1936, a grant was offered by the Carnegie Corporation, New York, to make a survey of the Indian museums. The work was entrusted to Markham, M.P. and H. Hargreaves, former Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, who visited all the existing museums in the country and brought out the report on the 105 museums of India, the first standard work of its kind. The report suggested to the government of India to take steps to improve their functioning.

The years of Second World War (1939 – 1945), marked a set back to the Museum movement as to every other activity in general as a global phenomenon. Mean while Mortimer Wheeler was appointed as Director General of ASI (1944-1947) where his research focused on the origins and development of the Indus civilization. With the joining of Mortimer Wheeler the movement of the site museums revived further momentum. He saw the pathetic condition of the museums under the control of ASI and all these was not serving they role effectively. Hence, a separate Museums Branch in ASI was created in 1946 by Mortimer Wheeler under the direct control of the Superintendent of Archaeology.