

Philosophy of Educational pedagogy of Museums in the Context of Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

In the bygone era, the responsibility of the Museum representatives was limited to acquisition, conservation, research and display of different art, archaeological, ethnographical, scientific and technological objects. However, in the present context responsibility of the Museums have much wider role for the visitors. The visitors or stakeholders not only look at the objects and admire and enjoy them, but also learn from them and pass them to the succeeding generation. The museum artifacts is not the only its consideration; their workmanship, historical association, connection with some important discoveries, links in the development of human culture and heritage. Whatever is the collection, educating the stakeholders through various educational activities is an essential part as one of the primary functions of a Museum.

Historical aspects of Museum

A history of the Museum that preserve and interpret the material evidence of the human race, human activity, and the natural world. As such, Museums have a long history, springing from what may be characteristic human desire to collect and interpret and having discernible origins in large collections built up by individuals and groups before the modern era.

The word museum has classical origins. In its Greek form, Mouseion, it meant "seat of the Muses" and designated a philosophical institution or a place of contemplation. Use of the Latin derivation, museum, appears to have been restricted in Roman times mainly to places of

philosophical discussion. Thus the great Museum at Alexandria, founded by Ptolemy I Soter early in the 3rd century BC, with its college of scholars and its library, was more a prototype university than an institution to preserve and interpret material aspects of the heritage. The word Museum was revived in 15th-century Europe to describe the collection of Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, but the term conveyed the concept of comprehensiveness rather than denoting a building. In 17th century museum was describes as collection of curiosity. At the end of 18th century, the 'Louvre' in Paris was first public Museum established as part of state education system.

The origin of the modern concept of Museum in India goes back to late 18th century. At this time, first Museum of India came into existence; the museum had become the part and partial of European education and culture. However, the question lies that the concept of museum is entirely a European manifestation. Moira Simpson (1996) interestingly said, “The impression of museums as purely western concept is not entirely accurate. Museum like models have existed traditionally in other cultures for many years, and some facets of conventional museum practice confirm to those indigenous models (Simpson 1996: 107). In India, indigenous models are founded in parts of the country in the forms of ‘*Chitrasala*’ (picture gallery) in the ancient Indian literature. Inscriptions of Ashoka on natural rocks, and exquisitely carved pillars or the caves of Ajanta with their unbelievable rock-cut architecture, sculptural excellence, and inscriptional records stating the execution of some of the caves and others of course partially contribute to compose a museum or at best enable people to constitute a local museum. The walls of the temples of India during the medieval period narrating the various facets of human life, society and the nature around show that the Indians have been highly skilled in creating the art forms as well as displaying them at public places. Yet,

museums as we understand today did not exist in ancient or medieval India.

The thirst of knowledge prompted the British to establish the Asiatic Society. Moreover in 1784 with the earnest effort of Sir William Jones, The Asiatic Society, an Orientalist institution was established at Calcutta (Now Kolkata) by the British scholars under the patronage of Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of India. The same interest urged the East India Company to found in London the first museum of Indian materials in the west, namely Oriental Repository at the beginning of the 19th century of both the nature of the collections of a library and museum. This Oriental Repository however acted as an advertisement of the prosperity of the east particularly Indian heritage in all directions that ultimately proved to be endlessly enthralling to the west.

In 1814, Dr Nathaniel Wallich, member of the Asiatic Society proposed to have a museum in the society. He was willing to donate duplicates of his collection and to work voluntarily for its development. On the second day of February of the same year the society decided to set up a museum with two sections such as Archaeological - Ethnological and Geological - Zoological. Dr Wallich joined as a Superintendent of the growing museum. The museum received objects from both Europeans and Indians

like Ram Comul Sen, Begum Sumroo, Kalikrishna Bahadur, Mathuranath Mallik, Radhakanta Deb, Rajendralal Mallik, etc. The Art Gallery, the first Eurocentric model in Modern India, was open to the public in December 1814. In 1866, the Indian Museum Act, known as Act 17 was passed and Dr John Alexander of Edinburgh was appointed as the first Superintendent of the Indian Museum (Plate 6) on October 29, 1866. In 1866, the Asiatic Society endorsed the formal transfer to the Trustees of the Indian Museum of almost all collection except books, journals, lithographs, pictures, busts, coins, which were to be held in trust by the Trustees of the Indian Museum for the Asiatic Society. These shifted in the Indian Museum, which is now situated in Chowranghie from 1875, and the present building of the museum was open for the public on 1 April 1878 (Banerjee 1990). The Museum houses ancient sculpture of India, Bharhut relics, bronze sculpture, Indian paintings, objects of cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, musical instruments, geological specimens etc. At present scenario Museums in India estimated now over six hundreds of different kinds.

Definition Museum

A Museum defined in Article 1, para. 2 of *Code of Professional Ethics* and in Article 2, para. 1 of *ICOM Statutes* (1990) as follows : "a non-profit making, permanent institution

in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment."

American Association of Museums defines a museum as "An organised and permanent, non-profit institution essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff which owns and utilizes tangible objects, earns for them and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule." The educational activities within the museums must be ready to provide a great variety of methods through which people can receive insights into and enjoyment of collections. The presence of objects that do not know the boundaries of language and literacy helps museums to be on advantageous position compared to other public service agencies, to serve as socially relevant agency for the education and development of the community.

Museum and education

A Museum is not an educational institution in the formal sense of the word. Museum education is the education in its broader sense. Eilean Hooper Green Hill (1996) considers museum in the context of education, as an institution that can offer an educational experience across a wide range of variables and in relation to a wide range

of institutions and organizations. The meaning of Museum education is that ‘museums provide a learning situation in which the visitors experience learning’. A learning situation is a condition or environment in which all the elements necessary for promoting learning are present. Learning experience is the mental or physical reaction or makes through seeing, hearing or doing the things to be learnt and through which one gains meanings and understanding of the materials to be learnt.

John Falk & Lynn (1992), who had extensively studied museum education in U.S.A, India, U.K and many other countries, described learning in museum as follows:

“Learning in Museums generally involves a visitor or a group of visitors attending to an object, a display, label, person, element or some mental construct of these. Museum learning has long been examined in relation to attracting power and loading power of exhibits in museums. The information thus collected by the visitors is stored in the brain and remains there over a period. The information a visitor receives during a museum visit tends to bear a ‘contextual map’. The museum visit represents a collection of experiences rather than a single unitary phenomenon. Any information obtained during the museum visit is likely to include social related, attitude related, and

cognitive related and sensory related association. These associations will become embedded in memory altogether with the result that anyone facet of these experiences can facilitate the recall of the entire experience. Thus, Museums are rather a source of intellectual stimulation and entertainment. Exhibition halls, properly arranged secondary collections, labels, guided tours, traveling exhibitions, school class visits, loan services to the schools, training courses to the teachers, illustrated lectures, motion pictures, film trips and publications, etc. are the various means, which constitute the educational activities in a museum.”

Representation of Museum objects for Stakeholders

The vital part of any Museum are the objects themselves, which are real, and capable if correctly interpreted of conveying information in an accurate manner. Here lies the skill of a Curator, i.e. exhibiting the objects in such a way that the visitors are automatically drawn towards it. Label, both big gallery labels and short individual ones, in many cases, are needed for identification and understanding. These should be short, meaningful and to the point. It is the responsibility of the Museums, apart from other functions to impart education through exhibition to the masses irrespective of their educational background. Now the Museums

belong to all, from retired old persons to nursery children, from the richest to the poorest, the illiterates or semi-literates, the physically challenged, the minority groups and all are welcome to museum exhibition, which provide indirect instruction in a discreet manner. The exhibition is the only language through which a museum can communicate and in order to make a direct impact on the masses, the exhibition has to be meaningful. In the display, the objects, the surrounding and the lighting should be coordinated. Any topic like irrigation, soil erosion and soil conservation, ideal home, farm management, industry, social welfare, etc. can be selected for exhibition in order to educate the masses to improve their lot. Pictures, photographs, drawings, charts, models and other subsidiary materials can be used to explain all exhibit, supplementary to the object themselves.

Educating through objects

Museum objects are important part of the cultural and natural heritage of a country. They act as important means of work and represent the basis of work, an object of research for various technical, social and natural science branches such as botany, zoology, history, history of art, archaeology, ethnography, etc. Objects can make unique contribution to our understanding of the working of individuals and societies. In short, it can tell us more about ourselves.

Hence, we collect objects to show illustrative examples of societies and individuals. Learning directly from the objects provide first-hand experience to the learners. For example, an individual who has seen and handle few fossils or examined an exhibit showing how fossils are formed would have a better knowledge about fossils than those who have only read about them. Sensory experiences form the basis of museum education (Harisson Molly 1960).

The foremost function of a modern museum is, therefore, to utilise the objects of the past as tools to generate knowledge and there by enlighten the minds of the public. The museums of modern times act as an academy and a school for the people at the same time. Hence, the educational work of a museum today, directly involves research scholars and educationists on the transmitting end and the people in general at the receiving end. The museum professionals and the educationists, who are responsible for the educational activities, should use their knowledge in the framework of the educational programs and present them to the people for their understanding, debate and adaptation. Of course, the research scholars, museum educationists and the public have to be directly involved with the museum materials. Thus, the museum collections are the central point around which all interest

and activities of specialists, educationists and the public revolve.

Museum education in school

Museum provide learning situations is quite different from those provided by formal educational institutions like schools.

- a) Museum provides free choice learning situations devoid of verbal instructions, assessment and other types of controls that exist in schools.
- b) Learning in museums is a spontaneous process, a personal experience not imposed on the visitor.
- c) Museum provide open communication of ideas, concepts and information involving exploration and discovery, and
- d) Class rooms in schools are home for 3R's: reading, riting and rithmetic, whereas museums are home for 3A's: the authentic, the aesthetic and the accessible. The authenticity as revealed by real objects and phenomena exhibited in museums, communicates with a powerful clarity to visitors. Museums are compelling aesthetic environments: they engage the senses, stimulate, inspires and sometimes even overwhelm. A museum makes the whole world, the past, the present and the imagined; accessible to the visitor. (Nigam, 1982).

Participatory exhibits for children.

According to an Old Chinese proverb, "I hear, I forget, I see, I remember, I do, I

understand", underlies the concept of 'participatory exhibits in museums. It enhances the quality and efficiency of communication. A child's ability to grasp information from an exhibit is dependent upon how he correlates the object on a situation with his personal experience. Participatory exhibits includes, where the visitor walk into an exhibit like a walk through diorama of a forest, walk through model of a heart, etc. Working models, which can be activated by the visitors, exhibits that are to be manipulated to find answers to questions, quiz and discovery boxes, etc. Most of the Science Museums have a large number of such participatory exhibits.

Discovery room

The concept has been developed in some American Natural History Museums as educational devices. In India too, in Museums like National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi, has Discovery Room based on similar pattern. These informal children's area provides a direct hand on experience for them to handle and examine specimens and participate in several educative activities. These enable children to explore and become familiar with a wide range of objects at their own place in a related atmosphere.

Educational activities through ICT

Apart from daily film shows and slide projections, Museums around the world are increasingly using modern electronic equipments and techniques in their exhibitions and interpretation. For example, the sequential lighting with commentaries and guide phones are used to depict the story of “Evolution of Earth”. Similarly, the ‘Theory of origin of Earth’ is also explained to the visitors with the help of sequential lighting and commentary. Similar animation techniques are used in communicating various ecological concepts, such as bio-geochemical cycles, photosynthesis, soil erosion and cellular defence. Apart from these, at places, there are provisions in the natural history galleries for continuous running of 8mm video films by using the photo phone equipment, due to changing in visitor behaviour, the available electronic techniques museum text or labels would gradually be replaced by A.V. and electronic techniques i.e. Television, Video and Computer Servers. Kiosk T.V. and Plasma T.V. are also found very useful in the exhibition galleries to understand the theme and functions of objects without the help of guide lecturer. These educational programmes can provide multisensory experience that stimulates active response in the museum visitors. Thematic and conceptual displays are better communicated

by the use of electronic media. Computer programmes, games and graphics are being increasingly used in museums to get the concept on theme of the exhibit across to the visitor. Such exhibits provide both fun and education. The Bioscience ‘Computer Room’ of the National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi, has a series of personal computers (PC’s) for interactive and participatory experience of visits to understand the function of DNA, the process of photosynthesis, working of eye, muscles, skeleton systems etc. Visitors especially schoolchildren, find this facility of fascinating learning experience.

Diorama

Today, the public is very keen on the kind of display that recreates nature, technically known as diorama. When a natural history specimen has been implanted, it can be set in its ecological setting called the ‘diorama’. It is of great educational value to accelerate the eco system in which the specimen has developed and thus the diorama gives an idea of what things are actually like. A few diorama series are also suggested for a Museum to illustrate the importance of plant environment so as to educate people on the need for growing plants in their houses and surroundings.

Education through research and publication

Through publications, a Museum can transmit its research to the scholars and public. There are three kinds of publications namely.

1. The outcome of the serious researches conducted on the subjects and published in the form of journals, catalogues, brochures, monographs or books.
2. Publications in the form of reports, guidebooks, introductory leaflets, etc. to familiarize the people with the museum and its activities.
3. Special publications on new gallery, special exhibitions, anniversary to popularize the museum within the community.

The other publications in general are as follows:-

1. **News Bulletin:-** It keeps the public informed about the activities of the museum. It covers subjects like current activities, announcement of important acquisitions, notices of special exhibitions, lectures, concerts, etc.
2. **Handbooks:-** It gives a brief outline of the museum, deal with gallery, special collection or a homogeneous group of objects in detail.
3. **Picture-Books:-** These are the collections of photographs of the masterpieces in a Museum with their brief descriptions under

a colourful background. Similarly, folders, leaflets, guide maps, picture post-cards and transparencies are various other publications brought out by museums to acquaint the people with their special activities.

4. **Basic Science Articles:-** Popular basic science articles for school educations should be published. The education in a museum should be based upon research, which applies specially to museum exhibits. The publication should have social communication and educational values.

Apart from providing the fundamentals of knowledge in the specific fields, the museum preserves and provides the basic material for research in practically all the academic disciplines like art, archaeology, anthropology, science, dance, music, technology, etc. Museums are the best centres of bringing out research works of repute. Since the Curators have a direct access to the original source material.

Educate About Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage includes resources from which our cultural identity is formed. Culture is present, so cultural heritage is historical. Cultural heritage is active not passive, even though choices may have been made for us by our parents, teachers, and other influential individuals. Culture and cultural heritage are both an individual and a group phenomenon. Cultural heritage influences our knowledge, beliefs, and emotions. We are all in multiple social groups (family, workplace, friends) so we

share in multiple cultures. Cultural heritage meets individual and group needs and it helps explain how we think and how we live. The specific fields of study within cultural heritage – the examination of individual cultures and cultural heritages; the preservation, management, organization and interpretation of cultural heritage resources; and the study the institutions that manage cultural heritage resources – are easier to address than cultural heritage in the abstract (Mirna Willer, Anne J. Gilliland and Marijana Tomic 2013).

We have inherited a large number of cultural properties through cultural heritage in the form of manuscripts, paintings, textiles, coins, arms and armour, leather goods etc., which are prone to deterioration. The museums as the custodian of those cultural heritage, is the right answer to the recourse of education and culture. The ravages of nature, human vandalism, fire and war have already destroyed many of the artistic creations. What remains had to be preserved at all cost, so that the future generations may have access to the ancient archaeological, ethnological, works; it is the responsibility of the present generation to provide for their preservation and take care of the objects it has inherited from the past.

Further prospective

Coordination between the museum, educational institutions and NGO's is the need of the hour. It is a fact that education is the potent instrument for human

development, on which depends the level of all round national development. All the countries and international organization like UNESCO and ICOM that people of all age groups and intellectual background can meet this gap in the field of communication through the effective use of museums and their collections by arranging thematic exhibitions agree it. This requires linking up these institutions with various educational efforts, planning and development programmes operating in the country. It would need adequate resources in space, finally and manpower, which could be available with a strong background and keen interest of the authorities responsible for the development of museum educational programmes, which is yet to be fulfilled in the country like India. The museum has to serve as an instrument for education and cultural development for all, from the illiterate masses to the enlighten class. A museum philosophy and museum ethics have to be established so that an awareness and sensitivity is created and more and more people be attracted to museums. In a developing countries like ours, the educational activities in a museum is new weapon, a new tool to be exploited for the all-round growth and understanding of the people. The museum provides a quick, effective and economical way of building of a nation, its background, resources, history,

culture, crafts and arts. Therefore, if museums are to continue and progress, they cannot avoid serving this cause of education, and if education is to be effective, it dare not neglect the museums.

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