

RELEVANCE OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL MUSEUM IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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We Indians have always taken pride in our heritage and culture. Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural (tangible and intangible) and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Culture is the non-biological behaviour of human beings i.e., beliefs, morals, laws, customs, knowledge, art and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Culture is learned, rather than inherited biologically. Art, like any other aspect of culture, reflects the cultural values and historical concern of a people.

Anthropological museum plays a vital role towards conserving indigenous culture and their tangible and intangible heritage. Again, museum gives special emphasis for the preservation of tribal/folk culture as tribal people have been losing their cultural identity and traditional life as they are exposed to the new forces of industrialization as well as globalization. The main job of anthropological museums is to interact with masses and educate the society at large by disseminating the knowledge of biological and cultural aspects of mankind from prehistoric era to contemporary times. By and large all anthropological museums have a rich collection of material culture collected from different ethnic groups, especially vulnerable communities. Thus, museums are playing more active roles in the regeneration and promotion of the cultural traditions and social histories of local communities, especially the 'populations at risk' that are undergoing rapid social change.

Anthropological museum occupies a very important place in democracy. It is run by the people, it stands for the people and it is an institution of the people. Man's right to knowledge and free use thereof is a key to the success of democracy. Museum, being an agent of education promotes knowledge through its exhibits. To 'experience' rather than have an abstract 'understanding' of the Indian culture, one should make a visit to museums in general and anthropological museums in particular. Anthropological museums, through their exhibits, can play a vital role in empowering the community, highlighting their potentialities in preservation of medicinal

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plants, water harvesting mechanism, knowledge of traditional architecture, expertise in art and crafts, conservation of forest in the form of sacred groves, and other traditional knowledge prevalent among various communities.

Eminent scholar Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, while delivering a lecture on 'Comprehending India on its own terms' said Indian society had tremendous and a unique diversity but there was a common thread, which bound it together. It is social and cultural plurality of India which makes it eternal, she said. If India had to be understood in its totality, traditional knowledge and wisdom of each of its society, their life style, art culture and a sense of brotherhood and harmony which pervades them, must be understood, she said. She further said people with different cultural background came to India over the ages and were assimilated with local people and this process ultimately led to evolution of Indian culture. All societies and cultures within the broader Indian society and culture had strong and useful traditions of their own, which were in no way inferior to any other culture.

Understanding different communities and their cultures is necessary from administrative, socio-political and developmental point of view. In our democratic country, unless one knows or understands the people and their culture, it is very difficult to provide any kind of solution to problems. It is true that anthropology is the only discipline where we study and represent the bio- cultural aspects of human beings through an intensive field work.

Field work or Field Research is fundamental to the subject Anthropology. In field work, a curator who works in anthropological museum conducts field tour to collect ethnographic objects, and additionally records oral literature (myths, songs, games, genealogies), documents performing arts (folk dances, folk dramas, puppet shows etc.) after staying with the target group in the field.

Human evolution and human variation, cultural diversity (various ways of life), origin and early development of human being and culture, linguistic diversity, are the various aspects of human being, generally depicted in an anthropological museum. The human evolution portrays different forms of human beings that evolved in this country during the last few million years. It also covers major adaptive changes like bipedalism, stereoscopic vision, erect posture, development of languages, etc. Illustrative panels like human microbial origin, human pedigree, human evolutionary sequences from early species and sub species of *Homo*. Siwalik ape man and fossil findings from Siwalik, becoming human - major evolutionary changes, million years of human existence, are the panels to supplement the story of evolution of mankind.

Human beings have adapted in several ways for their survival. In order to meet their requirements for food, clothing and shelter, people must adjust their behaviour to suit their environment. This adjustment which involves both change and stability is a part of adaptation. The food foraging way of life is the oldest and most universal type of human adaptation. Some ethnic groups, so called tribes, have also been surviving as shifting cultivators, pastoralists and agriculturists in this present era of technological development. The human diversity section provides an insight into the various survival strategies from hunting-gathering to agriculture, i.e., plough cultivation. Thus the museum would serve as an important medium for making people aware of their common origin and diverse ways of adaptation.

Language is an important source of diversity and unity. There are as many as 325 languages and 25 scripts in use deriving from various linguistic families like the Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Dravidian, Austro Asiatic, Andamanese, Semitic Indo-Iranian, and Indo-European. At least 65 percent of the communities (4365, studied by Anthropological Survey of India) are bilingual and most tribal communities are trilingual. The numerous mother tongues are important instruments of cultural expression and preservation of diversity.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL MUSEUM AND INDIAN CULTURES

All cultures change slowly or rapidly. No culture is absolutely static. Anthropological museum is the only place where the preservation of cultural objects is done to represent the original culture. The museum ensures the preservation and documentation of the traditional cultural heritage of various tribal and folk communities. Zonal anthropological Museum (ZAM) of Anthropological Survey of India exhibits the regional cultural heritages in the true sense. Each Zonal Museum has its own jurisdiction or geographical boundary as far as the museum collection is concerned. There are seven ZAM situated in different zones of our Indian subcontinent.

Over the last six decades the anthropological museums of Survey (established in 1945) have accumulated and preserved a large number of ethnographic specimens representing the wide range of heterogeneous cultural heritages of the Indian people. The purpose is to make a thematic display of these collections in order to make people aware of the rich cultural traditions of Indian communities through the dissemination of such bio-cultural information.

MUSEUM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Through the ethnographic specimens collected from ethnic groups in an anthropological museum, a community is portrayed in its totality. Though

these ethnographic specimens do not give the racial account of an ethnic group, they throw light on their aesthetics, economic pursuits, religious beliefs, indigenous knowledge system, food habits, costumes, degree of adaptability with the ecology, and so on.

The skill and indigenous knowledge with which tribal people design their homes and fashion various ethnographic objects with the limited accessible materials available in their surroundings mark these so-called underdeveloped people as cultured. And if in today's world we want to seek the roots of our cultural identity and visualize a model life pattern we have to go to the tribal group for it. An attempt has been made to perceive how ethnographic specimen, as museum collection, is significant bearing the cultural heritage of some ethnic groups. Examples of such specimens as trademarks of cultural bearing of particular ethnic groups are discussed below:

The Bison Horn Maria make a colourful headgear. The Headgear is locally known as *nacha-singa* (*nacha*-dancing, *singa*- horn) as they wear this headgear while dancing. This tribal community is also known as Dandami Maria. They are popular for their headgear, which also distinguish them from their counterpart i.e., Hill Maria or Abujhmaria- a tribal community, who live in the same cultural zone. This headgear marks the cultural identity of the community and signifies the genesis of the term Bison Horn Maria.

Each ethnographic object has its own cultural importance to the ethnic group that makes and uses it. The object is fashioned according to the needs of the community. As the ethnographic objects mark the cultural identity of a particular ethnic group or community, these should be well preserved. For the preservation of such objects, ethnographic and anthropological museums can play an important role. Moreover, in order to store and preserve for posterity, the various types of objects used by ethnic groups in their contemporary cultural context, people's participation in this exercise is a must so that preservation of cultural material with indigenous knowledge systems can be done in a more systematic way. In short, the study of ethnographic specimen helps in understanding the material traits of a culture, its origin, distribution, environmental adaptation and differences to a great extent.

RELEVANCE OF ZONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL MUSEUM

In the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) the Anthropological Survey of India proposed to establish a chain of Anthropological Museums for its Head Office, Kolkata, and the Regional Offices, with a view to document and preserve the bi-cultural heritage of the people, and tribal groups in particular, of our country which was implemented in the Fifth Five Year Plan. Since then, the first Zonal

Anthropological Museum was opened at the Sub-Regional Office at Jagdalpur on 7th April 1978, and other Zonal Anthropological Museums have started functioning at Nagpur (September, 1978), Shillong (April, 1979), Dehra Dun (1995), Port Blair (1978), Udaipur (1982) and Mysore (1979). The Zonal Museums give emphasis to the depiction of bio-cultural heritage of people of the concerned zones. The museums disseminate knowledge through permanent galleries and by organizing thematic exhibitions, showing the documentary film made by the Anthropological Survey of India, both in urban and rural areas of the country.

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is threatened today by cultural homogenization due to globalization, tourism, migration, the degradation of the environment, industrialization and rural exodus. For all these reasons, adequate measures must be developed to safeguard this heritage. Zonal Anthropological Museum is also working towards the preservation of intangible cultural heritage after organising thematic photographic exhibitions on different traditional performing arts like leather puppetry, yakshagana – a traditional dance drama form of Karnataka, etc. Many 16mm movie films on Chamundeswari, Tirupati Tirumala, Dasara of Mysore, and Mullukurumba dance were made. Photographic albums were prepared by Photography unit of Zonal Anthropological Museum. The audio section has made tape recordings of tribal folksongs, stories, dialects for linguistic analysis, seminar proceedings, speeches of noted personalities, interviews conducted during fieldwork, etc. Anthropological Museum is also making a documentary film on the way of life of various ethnic groups like the Agaria, Riang, Cholanaikan, Nicobarese, etc., towards the preservation of tribal cultural heritage.

The museologist and ex- director of National Museum, Dr. Grace Morley (1967) stated:

“Probably no museum subject in India needs more attention than Anthropology. Few countries are richer than India in tribal and folk arts and artefacts and all that goes with ancient traditional communities, which have developed had been protected in some isolation over long period of time. Their disappearance without trace or without adequate record represents a loss not only for India but also for the world”.

Development schemes by and large failed due to utter negligence to felt needs of the community people ignoring some of their cultural values. Real development can be achieved if the planning be made considering the worldview of the community concerned and human potentialities and material resources. Anthropological Museum can play a vital role towards empowering the community people highlighting their potentialities in preservation of medicinal plants, water harvesting mechanism, traditional architecture,

conservation of forest in the form of sacred groves, and other traditional knowledge prevalent among the various communities. These potentialities are rightly highlighted in the anthropological museum like Museum of Mankind, located at Shamla Hills, Bhopal.

MUSEUM HELPS IN LEARNING PROCESS

Anthropological Museum is not only a treasure house of the tangible evidence of man's history, of his creativeness, but it is supported by a good number of scholarly publications and a large number of audio-video documentations. The museum helps in achieving the aim of "the process of learning" through its progressive museological and research activities.

Ethnographic objects, which are made from living organisms, are categorically known as organic objects. These organic objects are fashioned out of wood, leaves, leather, cotton, bark, paper, ivory, bone, feathers and are prone to climatic changes and deteriorate more easily than inorganic objects. The inorganic objects are made of metals like iron, aluminium, clay, stone, plaster of paris, fibre glass, etc. The ethnographic objects are kept in a better-preserved state when these are housed in their native climate of particular tribal/folk village. But when these are brought to the museum, they are exposed to a new climatic situation and need special care for the desired maintenance for upkeep. Museum is the only place where the preservation of cultural objects can be done for the representation of the past.

Wooden Objects (plough, leveller, mortar, pestle, etc.)

Leaf Objects (rain hat, basket, etc.)

Leather Objects (leather pouch, puppet, and musical instruments)

Bark Objects (bark cloth, rope, etc.)

Bone Objects (tortoise skull, boar skull, fossils, etc.)

Feather Objects (part of the arrow)

Wax Made Objects (toys)

Cotton Objects (dress, headgear, etc.)

Bamboo Objects (container, measuring jars, baskets, etc.)

Cane Objects (baskets, walking sticks)

Grass Objects (rope, broom, basket)

Gourd Objects (ladle, container, flask, etc.)

Shell Objects (coconut shell container)

Paper Objects (toys made of papier- mache work and paintings)

Iron Objects (cutting implements)

Brass Objects (lamps, tumbler, plate etc.)

Silver Objects (ornaments)

Clay made objects (earthen pots, clay toys)

Stone Objects (prehistoric stone tools, stone sculptures)

Nylon Objects (fishing net)

Plastic objects (basket, round sheet,)

Beads item (necklace)

Plaster of Paris items (art objects)

These ethnographic objects are the products of creativity of the tribal/ folk population. Not all the creations are acquired by the museum. Creativity of the human being is possessed by the museum if the same can create an aesthetic appeal. There are various memories attached with every piece of creativity. When a creative object is acquired by the museum, it is not only the cultural material but also the history attached to the object that is brought to the museum. It is true if one is well versed with these types of collections, he or she can handle any type of museum.

MUSEUMS AND GLOBALIZATION

In the era of globalization, the biggest problem today is the gradual standardization and homogenization of all categories of cultures. The tribal and other folk communities are facing a common threat of bio-cultural reductionism, from mega developmental projects, which are compelling them to adapt themselves to transplanted cultures and transgenic crops.

Homogenizing influence brought by globalization is often times challenged by social scientists. People concerned about the after effects of globalization argue that globalization may be an immensely controversial process that assaults national sovereignty, erodes local culture and tradition and threatens economic and social instability (Rothkop, 1997).

Globalization is a process through which the diverse world is unified into a single society. It is a threat to our cultural diversity. It is the museum which can play a catalytic role relating to cultural sustainability. Not only for the newly created federal states of Uttarakhand (9th Nov, 2000) and Chhattisgarh (1st Nov, 2000) but for the whole of India, anthropological museums play an important role in constructing a political, social and cultural identity facing the changes brought about by globalization. Lidia Guzy reported the same in his paper India's Museum in Transformation that museum representation of

tribal and rural culture can be seen as India's answer to current global challenges. Highest scientific priority is ascribed to collecting as well as for revitalization and empowerment of local cultures in order to save them from extinction. In rescuing and preserving the manifestation of cultural diversity, museums often take over the function of cultural NGO.

The overriding question facing museums today, especially in the third world and in most Asia pacific countries, is that of their relevance and survival. In order to retain their relevance, the museums have to play a role in combating the growing monoculture of life and mind, by documenting, preserving and presenting the polycultural technologies of subsistence and resources management and life enhancing elements of knowledge and skills, transmitted by communities trans-generationally. They have to treat the community habitats as living museums. They can play a role in development, not by commoditizing heritage for its display and representation, but by its revitalization and replenishment.

Commercialization of tribal art is a big threat to the Indian tribal population. Without due right tribal art is being utilised in the textile industry and a huge margin goes to the merchants. Tribal painting and tribal art forms are attracting a large number of Indian as well as foreign tourists and the benefits are reaped by the hotel and tourism industry. In the banking sector, folk and tribal paintings attract the customer for banking by using it in making attractive hoardings for promoting debit card and credit cards.

CHANGING ROLE OF MUSEUM PROFESSION

Being curators of the museum, we are generally obsessed with the objects instead of with the man and his total heritage. A museum professional of the anthropological museum not only engages himself to collect and care for the objects but also performs the role of co-curator in the age of new museum movement. He acts as a catalyst to help the community members who are the real curators of their own cultural heritage. As the concept of New Museology diverts our concentration towards the new arena, we the curators of the museum have given emphasis on how a museum can be community oriented instead of object oriented. By developing the community museum sites, the museum professionals are trying to assure the community members that they are the real owners and beholders with their exotic rich culture, which needs to be revitalized or revived in the new millennium era. We should, therefore, make the museum lively and man oriented rather object oriented.

REVITALIZATION OF TRIBAL ART FORMS

The museum organises demonstration and training for registered participants under 'Do and learn' programme to revitalize the various art forms and related traditional knowledge. Under this demonstration cum training programme, various artists and craftsmen from different communities are invited to the museum premises. The community artists demonstrate the art form with the materials traditionally used for the particular art and crafts. School children and housewives are the targeted participants who learn the skill and knowledge related to various dyeing and less known art forms like bell metal crafts of Chhattisgarh, dokra craft of West Bengal, lacquer work, applique work and palm leaf engraving of Orissa, wood carving, iron work, *jari* making etc., of Madhya Pradesh, applique and embroidery of Rabari people of Gujarat. Thus empowering the women and children through training in traditional art and crafts is the practical implication of anthropological museum.

CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW INITIATIVES

It is Anthropological Museum that can design the gallery specially meant for its visitors with disabilities and to provide them awareness of the rich and diversified culture of our country and the contribution of each community to the cultural heritage of India. An exhibition of such kind will provide opportunity to sensitize the disabled people of an unknown culture and the contribution of each community to the cultural heritage of India. Display of ethnographic collection and photographs can be made by using continuous panels with pedestals of suitable height so that a disabled person can easily touch the items displayed on the pedestals while moving from one place to the other on wheel chair.

The monomorphic specimens can be arranged in such a way that persons with visual impairments can identify and feel the artifacts in an appropriate way. A continuous metal track can be embedded into the floor to enable easy movement of the wheelchair along the exhibition. Monophonic sound system with headphone equalizing with the exhibits or describing the display items can be provided for each section of the exhibition. Use of Braille (typing in relief for the blind) can be made available to the disabled persons to understand the details of the exhibition. A museum guide having the knowledge of sign language can solve the problem of communication with the people with hearing impairments. Wheel chair service can solve the problem of easy movement to the persons with mobility impairments as well as persons with visual impairments.

Creating awareness related to health care among the common people is another very important aspect which can only be portrayed by the museum

curator, as medical anthropology is one of the specialized sub-disciplines. The health problems and health care issues of the rural/ tribal people are generally addressed in the museum. The use of ethno-medicine in different health problems and prevalence of diseases in different ecological zones, food and health care, hygiene and health, preventive health care systems, scenario of health care services, health and demography are the various sub-themes which can be highlighted while organizing an exhibition.

It is the exhibition which can be helpful to create awareness among the masses in the field of preventive health care. The role of medical anthropologist and the curator of anthropological museum will be of prime importance to provide a platform to solve such health care issues. Through anthropological museum in particular and other museums in general, we should project the health scenario (problems) and disseminate the knowledge of health care issues in terms of health awareness.

Another way to make the anthropological museum popular is by organizing conservation and care programme for art objects for the local people as most of the households in the city are a showcase of art objects, and common people are very much interested in knowing the techniques of preservation and conservation of their art objects.

CONCLUSIONS

In this age of globalization it is a necessity to develop a resource centre cum souvenir outlet for tribal/folk culture and the art and crafts in anthropological museums, or all district headquarters, if not possible in all the tribal dominated areas. Promoting development of tribal/folk arts and crafts, the important factors of rural economy, will provide better employment opportunities to a number of unemployed craftsmen.

Anthropological museum is a different kind of museum. It relates the past with the present. But since the roots of the present are in the past, the task of conservation and interpretation is very important. Indian civilization is not only encapsulated in sacred books, but also cherished in various cultural institutions like museums. In our pursuit of high values, we often forget the simple people who have contributed so much to the making of the cultural fabric of India. It is good to be reminded about our roots, of early inhabitants of our Indian population. It is essential that we should give some recognition to our early settlers who contributed in many and variegated ways to the shaping of our society. Preservation of such contribution in the form of material culture and cultural institution is highly essential in this age of globalization as part of the protection of cultural heritage. In this venture, anthropological

museum is playing its might after preservation of some of the early cultural traits which serve many hundred generations of humankind.

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