

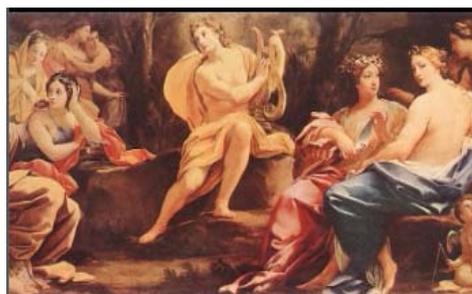


Definition, origin and importance of museum

Introduction:

Museum is an institution. A museum tells the story of man throughout the world. It narrates how humanity has survived in its environment over the years. It houses things created by nature and by man. In modern society it houses the cultural soul of the nation.

The word museum is derived from the Greek word *Mouseion* which means the seat of Muses. The name museum indicates a temple of Muses. Greek mythology tells us that Muses were the daughter of Zeus, the



Greek Jupiter. They were born in Peira at the foot of Mount Olympus - the mountain of gods. Nine of them were regarded as the divinities who presided over arts and science.

Origin of Museum:

We find the word museum used in its original sense in the Alexanderian Museum, a temple



dedicated to the Muses-the goddess of learning. The important collection of books,



products of art and crafts were placed under the charges of distinguished scholars there. Scholars from different countries used to gather there to learn at the fest of

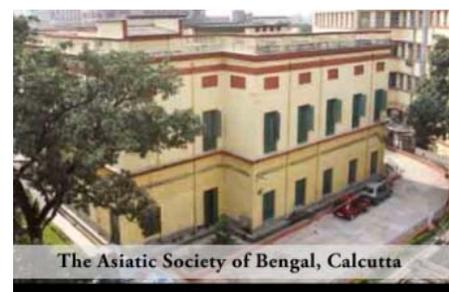
famous matters whose names had not yet been forgotten- Plotemy, Hero, Euclid and others.

After the destruction of Alexandrian Museum nothing was known for long of any attempt at establishing an institution like it anywhere else. The oldest surviving museum on a sound basis is the Ashmolean – Oxford. Apart from this the great and typical museum was established in the year 1753. Much later the Fitz William Museum of Art and Archaeology was established at Cambridge and it is now a department of the Cambridge University.

In Europe towards the latter part of 16th century and beginning of 17th century, the collection of amusement led to the actual beginnings of some of the great museums of today. Museum, therefore is not a modern innovation. The first museum as already mentioned is accepted to have established in Alexandria in 283 B.C. However, the evidences of a certain kind of museum in Babylon and small private collection of curiosities had been reported to exist earlier than this museum. They were like the collections in our modern museums.

History of Indian Museum:

Hindi term for Museum is *Ajayabghar* (wonder house) or *Jadughar* (Magic house) and now it is known as *Sangrahalaya*. The first museum collection in India started in 1796. The Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta founded in 1784



decided to house and exhibit whatever it had accumulated. In 1814, the society was able to establish a proper museum and since then it was known as Indian museum. The museum was divided into two sections:

- 1) Archaeology , Ethnology and Technology
- 2) Geology and Zoology

Meanwhile, in other parts of India the idea of museum sprang up. In 1819 efforts were made to establish a museum in Madras but it took a longtime to materialize it on a sound basis. A few years later, the pathology museum of Grand Medical College, Bombay, the first medical museum in Asia was opened. It was not until 1863 that museums were also established in Lucknow and Nagpur. Afterwards, other museums were born gradually at Bangalore-1865, Faridabad-1867, Raipur-1875, Jaipur-1887, Rajkot-1888, Pune-1890, Baroda-1894, Trichinopoly-1895.

In the 20th century when Lord Curzon was the viceroy, there was an outburst of activity for establishing archaeological museums all over the country. Museums were also established at Baripat-1903, Sarnath-1904, Agra-1906, Jodhpur-1909, Delhi Fort -1990, New Delhi-1949, Calcutta Ashutosh Museum -1937. In India, there are about 120 museums at present.

Importance of Museum:

The importance of a museum are mainly educational and cultural and not merely housing collections of curious objects just as the old Hindi word “Ajayabghar” might suggest. Thus the importances of a museum is two-fold.

- 1) A place of work for the scholars
- 2) A place of instruction for the general public

The museum is a veritable treasure house for everybody who think beyond the everyday matters of human life. The expenditure of the world stored up there, no thoughtful person should leave its door without gaining something from a visit.



The museum is a picture book of the history of man and for study it is to enlarge one's comprehension of what man has done and what man can do. The universe of man like the universe of nature extends its boundary daily before our eyes and it is in our museum that the story is displaced for the visitors to come.

During the last century progress has been systematized and museums have acquired a recognized place in the educational life of the civilized people. The services of the museum to the general public are three-fold:

- 1) It stimulates curiosity, the gratification of which increases knowledge.
- 2) In some of its department, it exhibits the aesthetic culture. It opens before the visitors the beautiful products of nature and of art. It shows what man has been able to create out of clay, stone or metal or by the use of pigments and so gives him means of training, his taste and developing a cultivated appreciation of the beauties.
- 3) It provides recreational intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment.

The education survey of a museum is not merely passive but active. It is not enough to build and stalk a museum and to let the public find out its value for themselves. Museum provides opportunities for visual instructions which is more impressive and lasting than oral instruction.

At its deepest level a museum is a collective memory bank of human achievement through a collection of objects. The museum's function can therefore be seen at its basic level as ensuring the objects that associates with human life. After that follows the activity of presenting the objects to the people so that human consciousness continues to incorporate these achievements in its activities. Museum officials execute innumerable actions to achieve these goals.

Conclusion:

Museums have a significant role to play in preserving the anthropological record. Anthropology began in museums and museums continued to be intimately associated with the discipline.

In modern society it has become necessary and indeed urgent for museums to redefine their missions, goals, functions and strategies to reflect the expectations of a changing world. Today museums must become agents of change and development. They must mirror events in society. The museums must become institutions that can foster peace.

Museums must show leadership in the promotion of heritage of the nation. They must tackle current problems in society such as the problems of drugs, street children, prostitution or lack of appreciation by the citizens in their involvement in the preservation of the heritage and the cultural property of the nation. As institution they must not be afraid to speak through their exhibitions and programmes for good of the nation.

In our society today, museums must promote exhibitions that are topical and challenging. They must broaden their scope and not restrict themselves solely to objects and materials in their collections. In a changing world, museums have become very important institutions that are respected and valued. Anthropology can build on the wealth of anthropological materials that exist in the nation's museums.
