

CHAPTER 4

OVERVIEW OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTION IN MUSEUMS OF INDIA

Shobita Punja (1991), renowned museum scholar opines that “The earliest Indian museums are more than 100 years old and have separate sections on art and archaeology, as well as galleries for geology, zoology, anthropology etc. The first important museum established was Indian Museum in Calcutta in year 1875. In parallel to these museums, medical, university and industrial museums sprang up, to encompass the wide range of interests and needs of the times”. She also emphasises on the fact that museums in India were of British origins and had archaeology as a significant collection.

Report on ‘Museums of India’ by Markham and Hargreaves (1936), mention about with the opening of the new century there occurred an outburst of the establishment of archaeological museums throughout the country, mainly owing to the interest of Lord Curzon and development of the Archaeological Survey under Sir John Marshall. Survey was responsible in establishing museum at Sarnath (1904), Agra (1906), Peshawar (1907), Delhi Fort (1909), Mandalay (1905), Delhi (Central Asian antiquities Museum, 1929) and Lahore Fort (1928), in addition to half-a-dozen created on excavated sites. In 1911 came the first Directory of Indian Museums, and Dr. J. Ph. Vogel supplied to the Conference of Orientalists detailed information relating to each of 39 museums then existing in India. Museums have sprung up in many of the larger towns in India and in several smaller ones. The report mentions a total of 105 museums by that time (1936) in India.

The survey of museums in India through various dictionaries, on grounds of administrative control and finances broadly seven categories of museums came to light: national museums and national stature, state museums, site museums under the Archaeological Survey of India, museums under the control of civic or corporate bodies, museums of learned societies, university and department museums. During the research study, archaeological collections housed in few selected museums of different administrative setups were surveyed and studied. From the displays of selected museums (studied),

the Science centres at various regions in India that promote archaeology as a part of their display collection, the National Science Centre at Delhi with vivid display of heritage , is one of the finest example of the same.

Apart from the museums studied in Chapter 2 for proposing educational activities for them and the empirical studies done in chapter 3, the present chapter discuss about 15 representative museums visited and studied by the researcher to see the amount of archaeological collection in those museums, their communicative values, and educational potentialities to popularise the discipline of archaeology and ancient history.

4.1 National Level Museums

1. Indian Museum, Kolkata

The archaeological section of the museum represents stone tools, skeletal remains, proto-historic artefacts. The display was made communicable through the kiosk (Fig 4.1.1). It also has vast collection of sculptures ranging from 3rd century BC to the late medieval period. Varied collection of Gandhara sculptures, collections from archaeological sites like Taxila, Jamalgarhi, Peshawar and Swat valley are rare collections and significant in terms of cultural history of our country. The museum has a tactile corner in Sculpture section that is popular among children as they can move images of related display and learn about them. The reconstruction of the Bharhut Stupa is one of the most interesting archaeological display to make public know about the Buddhist architecture.



Fig. 4.1.1 Display of stone tools and evolution.

2. Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad, Telangana

The museum considered to be the largest in India, and is brain child of Mir Yusuf Ali Khan, the last of the illustrious personality of the Nizam family of Hyderabad. It has exhaustive collection from medieval to modern arts and crafts of India. Starting from range of toys, one can see dolls, Indian textiles, wood, bronze, jade, armoury, Indian paintings, European sculptures, paintings, Chinese and Japanese art, furniture etc. on display. The museum is a repository of rare objects from nearly all over the worlds, right from Europe to the Far Eastern nations in Asia, apart from chronicles of the rich Indian heritage- dating from the Mauryan to the Mughal dynasty and the rule of Nizams.

4.2 State Level Museums

3. Chandigarh, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

The museum has excellent collection of Gandhara sculptures (Northwestern frontier of Pakistan), especially the *Bodhisattvas*, paintings from Mughal, Basoli and Kangra schools, and contemporary art. There is a section devoted to display of stone tools in India, fossils and human evolution. The museum is frequently visited by children groups and organisations like Heritage Lab conducts tours and programs in collaboration with the museum. Apart from creative activities, various hands on sessions related to photography of objects or writing about their significance etc. are conducted, periodically. The most interesting collection is the Gandharan sculptures. Since majority of the Gandharan collection is located in museum in Pakistan, this collection is very important in Indian context. The museum can do many meaningful activities to popularise the Gandharan collection.

4. Government Museum, Ahar - Udaipur, Rajasthan

Present day Ahar, which was called “Aghatpur” in ancient times is situated on the left bank of *ayad* river. The museum houses excavated material of the site, Ahar area and excavated material from “Maheshwar- Navdatoli” hillock. The material comprised of grey ware, dish on stand, black red ware are typical pottery unearthed and displayed in this museum. Apart from archaeological

artefacts, made of terracotta, shell, copper, etc.; sculptures of Vaishnav and Jain association and some miniature paintings are also part of display.

5. Goa State Museum, Panaji

The current museum complex at Patto was inaugurated in 1996. Museum thematically depicts different aspects of the Goan history and culture. The aim of creating this museum was centralizing and preserving antiquities, art objects, culturally important objects of the State. Museum has 14 galleries comprising collection of sculptures, anthropology, numismatics, geology, environment, religion, history of printing, furniture etc. There were drawings of children on display at ground floor that reflected the active nature of museum for young visitors.

6. Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

Orissa State Museum is a multipurpose institution. It has rich collection of sculptures from 3rd C. B.C. to the late mediaeval period. The sculptures have been arranged to present the distinctive architectural ethos and specific artistic representations of Buddhist, Jaina and Brahmanical pantheon. It displays exquisite specimens of Orissan art traditions. Apart from these artefacts, epigraphical collections such as coins and manuscripts are also part of the display. The collections pertaining to archaeology are mostly displayed in the ground floor galleries of the museum.

4.3 Local Museums under ASI

7. Archaeological Museum, Amravati, Andhra Pradesh

The archaeological museum, Amravati situated on the banks of river Krishna was established in 1951 antiquities from the nearby excavated site of the Mahastupa, the majestic monument of the Buddhists were used for display. It houses the crystal caskets with the relics believed to be of Buddha, gold rudraksha mala with deeply ornamented pendant etc. other antiquities like semi precious stone beads, bangles of different materials, etc. from 2nd century CE to the medieval period are displayed. There is an open air gallery with a model of the Mahastupa.

8. Archaeological Museum, Chandragiri, Andhra Pradesh

Archaeological Museum, Chandragiri was established in the year 1988-89 in the Rajamahala, near Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. It has rich collection of stone/metal sculptures and other cultural vestiges retrieved from other historical places like Gudimallam (Dist. Chittoor), Gandikota (Dist. Kadapa) and Yaganti (Dist. Kurnool), distributed in its Gudimallam, Yaganti and durbar hall, bronze and miscellaneous galleries. The museum houses a number of stone and metal sculptures of various divinities of Saiva, Vaishnava and Jaina religious affinity. At the entrance corridor the museum houses a corner with television and audio devices for the people to see the video of site and its archaeological and historical significance. It benefits the differently abled people (in wheelchair) as the museum has been developed in a heritage building (that has old architecture which cannot be violated by making lift) and to reach the first floor galleries one has to climb a flight of stairs. Moreover a *Son et lumiere* (sound and light show) is highlight of this place that uses technology to propagate the story of site and related historical events.

9. Archaeological Museum, Velha Goa

Functioning since 1964, museum is housed in the abandoned convent of St. Francis of Assisi. The collection of the museum consists of Brahmanical sculptures, Hero stones and Sati stones of the early and late medieval periods, portraits, coins, stamps, wooden and bronze sculptures, armoury etc. The ground floor gallery has a showcase display of stone tools and human evolution showing the simple and composite stone tools (Fig. 4.3.1). Museum also has a separate section for children (Fig. 4.3.2a, b, c) where they conduct programs related to heritage of the place. This was an additional feature especially designated to children and during visit researcher observed photographs of monuments of the region, drawings prepared (Fig. 4.3.3) by children on the walls of this Children Activity Centre. The activity centre had table and chairs for groups to assemble and use for activity. There were descriptive panels with aerial views of the heritage sites such as Mahadev temple at Kurdi dedicated to lord Shiva belongs to 13th century AD ascribed to Goa-Kadamba dynasty.

The allocation of space for young visitors indicates that this centre is a regular hub for activities and different age group children visit as the descriptive panels were suited to the level of senior children. There were few panels, 2D sculpture plaques on the walls just to give a feel of being in a museum.



Fig. 4.3.1 Display of Cultural landscapes and stone tools



Fig. 4.3.2a Children activity centre, Archaeological Museum, Velha, Goa

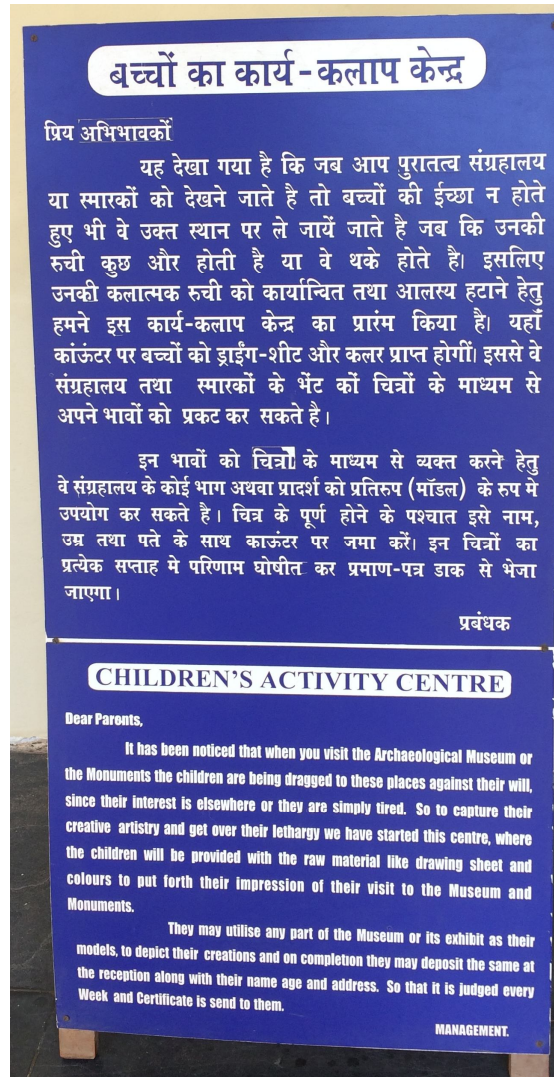


Fig. 4.3.2b Board outside Children activity centre



Fig. 4.3.2c Interior view of Children activity centre



Fig. 4.3.3 Drawings displayed at Children activity centre

10. Archaeological Museum, Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh

Nagarjunakonda, in Andhra Pradesh, is an island museum in India. A specially designed building was constructed on the small hillock and the artefacts exhibited excavated from the Nagarjuna Sagar dam project site on river Krishna. The unique island museum was established in 1966 to collect, preserve and exhibit the antiquities retrieved from the excavations. These salvaged antiquities are housed in a spacious structure simulating a Buddhist vihara on plan. A cultural sequence from early Stone Age to medieval times was established during excavation process. The remains of more than seventy structures and an array of antiquities in various media including the reliquaries of Buddha and his disciples were discovered from the site. This information can be seen in the touch screen kiosk that is kept at the beginning of museum. It also gives details of the salvaged structures that were reconstructed on the site and at Anupu (land near the banks of river Krishna). Thus one digital source and all information make it easy for the visitor to access cultural heritage related information easily with interactive visual aid. This is a

significant application of digital technology to popularise the Buddhist religion and tourism in India.

11. Archaeological Museum, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh

Sarnath is one of the four most important Buddhist pilgrimage centers, where Buddha gave his first sermon. Excavations conducted on site from 1835 onwards (till 2014) brought to light numerous structural and artistic remains. The recovered objects are now housed in the Archaeological museum, Sarnath, the oldest site museum established in 1910 A.D. There are five galleries for sculptures and two verandahs for architectural members in the museum so as to house and display the antiquities datable from 3rd century BC to 12th century AD. Museum is in close proximity to the excavated site, thus understanding the context of the collection as a potential resource is easy for educators. These kinds of museums enable developing heritage site tours connecting the collections and curriculum. They can sensitize young visitors towards the archaeological discoveries that turn into National identity such as the Lion capital of Sarnath, is significant symbol of Indian constitution.

12. Archaeological Museum, Thanesar (Kurukshetra), Haryana

The area is rich in varied archaeological remains, first explored in nineteenth century by A. Cunningham. The collection had abundance of pottery, bricks and brickbats all over the mound ranging from early historical times to late Mughal and even modern. The results of past excavations have yielded interesting evidences about the rich material cultures covering a span of nearly two thousand years or more and it would be of interest to historians and archaeologists. Museum has sculptures, excavated remains such as terracotta, pottery, beads, terracotta sealings, copper objects, figurines, iron objects, shell bangles etc. The excavated area is in close vicinity of the actual museum thus a potential resource for conducting heritage site tour.

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

This period museum, organised and maintained by Archaeological Survey of India is fittingly located in one of the important buildings- The Exchange Building-of Fort St. George. The idea of setting up a museum in this building

to house the relics of the Raj found scattered in the Fort was mooted in 1946 by Col. D.M. Reid of Old Madras Guards. Organised in 1948, this museum now has more than four thousand artefacts of colonial period; best among them on display. Collection comprise of copper and silver medals and medallions, porcelain, portraits, prints, numismatic, uniforms and silverware etc.

Museum imparts training to the teacher trainees as well. It has tactile objects (Fig.4.3.4) corner that is part of learning aspects in the museum. The notable aspect that was observed was in the Coin display gallery. An interesting example is a coin gallery digital screen (Fig.4.3.5) in which an electronic chip based technology embedded inside a Creative Movement binder is used to see the obverse and reverse of coin in movement. This is a relatively new trend that was seen in an Indian museum.



Fig.4.3.4 Shields kept for tactile corner



Fig. 4.3.5 Digital chip based coin display technology

4.4 Museums under Corporate or Civic Bodies

14. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, Maharashtra

The foundation stone of museum was laid by the Prince of Wales on 11th November 1905 and the museum was named as Prince of Wales Museum of Western India. The museum was opened to public in 1922, and at present it is renamed as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) and houses approx. 50, 000 artefacts as an outstanding collection comprising of sculptures, terracottas, bronzes, excavated artefacts from the Harappan sites, Indian miniature paintings, European paintings and decorative arts from the far east. The Pre and Proto History gallery avidly displays the artefacts starting from stone tools to the chalcolithic period. Apart from programs for children on crafts, coins, clay activities such as pottery, museum provides information booklets and replica kits on Indus Valley Civilization. They also conducted hands on sessions on archaeological galleries as described in annual review of 2010-11. Review also mentions about the piece of old civilisations delivered to school describing the first kit launched by the museum which includes important artefacts from the Harappan Civilisation (Fig.4.4.1a, b). These

replicas are also circulated in schools within the region. Museum has Activity tent and Museo-bus that features activities and display related information especially for children. In 2012 they had programs likes ‘Harappan Holidays’ that focused on the civilizations gallery display including Mesopotamia as a point of discussion. Program like ‘Journey to the afterlife- Hieroglyphs decoded” was conducted for specially-abled children. Recently Museo-bus (2019) showcased the Numismatic collection and techniques with an informative leaflet to initiate the children to make individual coin in activity. The museum has brought out resource packs and CD that focus on archaeological display pertaining to Harappa. CSMVS has been conducting programs exclusively for children and cater to the young audiences with diverse ways. Audio-visual aids, touch screens, dioramas such as Great Bath of Mohenjodaro, and photographic panels, which help the visitors to acumen archaeological heritage (Fig. 4.4.2a, b).



Fig.4.4.1a Replica Kit of CSMVS



Fig.4.4.1b Harappan artefacts in Replica kit



Fig.4.4.2a Showcase in CSMVS on Harappan toys



Fig.4.4.2b Showcase in CSMVS on excavated sites

4.5 University Museums

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

The Department of Archaeology at Deccan College has been engaged in Archaeological excavations and explorations in different parts of India right from 1939. The collections generated through years lead to the development of museum. The present museum has grown into a mature stage with Prehistoric, Chalcolithic, Megalithic, Early- Historic, Sculptural Art, Epigraphy and Numismatics, and Ethno-archaeology galleries. Excavations carried out at Jorwe, Nevasa, Chandoli, Inamgaon, Navdatoli, Kuntasi etc. yielded large number of chalcolithic antiquities i.e. pottery, stone tools (both microliths and polished stone tools), beads, terracotta objects, bone objects, human skeletal remains, animal bones, bone tools, copper objects like axes, chisels, bangles, rings, fish hooks, beads etc. The museum conducts extensive outreach and inhouse activities along with facilitating the schools and other institutions by providing guided tours. is frequented by school groups on request to the department. A notable feature is the stratigraphic (Fig. 4.5.1) representational display of site of Nevasa in Prof. H.D. Sankalia Memorial gallery, and similar display is developed in CSMVS museum also. A model of iron smelting

furnace at Naikund illustrating the significance of the same is an interesting display. All these complementary visual displays apart from archaeological artefacts create a sense of understanding about archaeological structures and settlements.

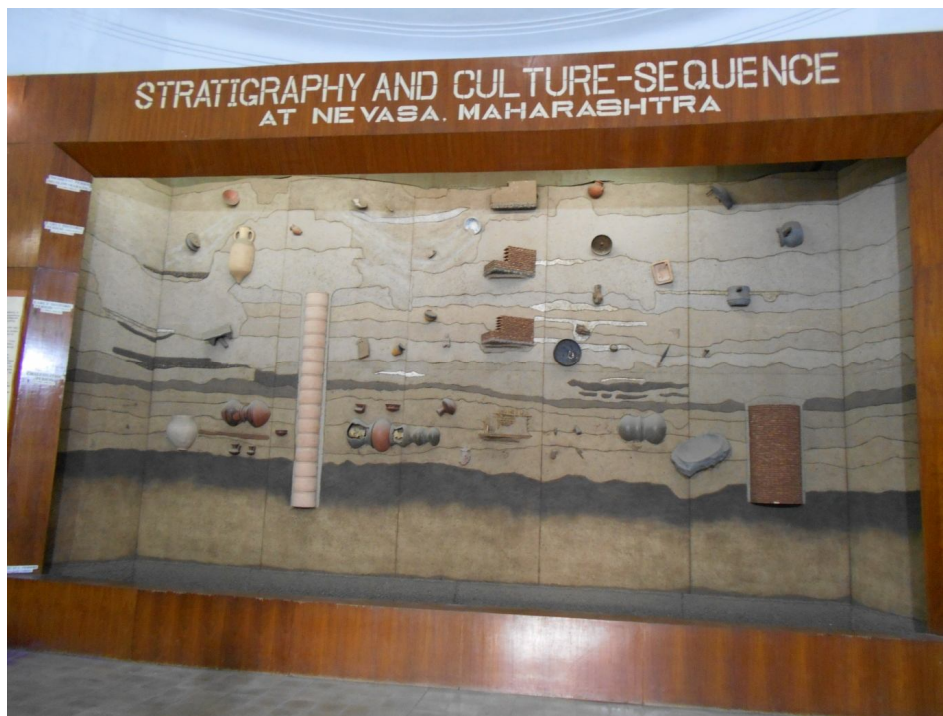


Fig.4.5.1 Stratigraphy (reconstructed) display

As quoted by Paris (2002) 'What is it about museums that make them unique learning environments? Museums are places where the objects and messages have been selected as ones of high cultural value- whether one is referring to a specific art collection, historically salient artefacts, or a collection of bones or scientific findings.' Many new museum displays are rich in objects and weak in interpretation: this appears to be based on the dual aims of reducing didactic content and returning power to objects (Knell et al. 2007).

The museums with significant collection of archaeology were visited to observe the display and type of communication occurring there on general daily basis. The table below summarises the survey of museums highlighting the aspects of communicative values pertaining to archaeological collection.

Sr. No .	Name of the museum	Interesting/ key archaeological collection	Communication strategies (communicative value- excellent/ good/ need to be improved)	Suggestions to improve the communicative value
1.	Indian Museum, Kolkata	Bharhut Stupa and Gandhara sculptures	Touch screens, outreach programs. (good)	Tactile tours using replicas can be introduced as sections of museum have replica displays.
2.	Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad, Telangana	Sculptures from Gandhara and Chola period, Egyptian art	Audio visual tour guide device, brochures (good).	Museum has rich collection from all over the world, thus gallery specific tours or selected collection based tours & programs can be introduced.
3.	Chandigarh, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh	Gandharan sculptures	In house activities and outreach programs with NGOs like Heritage Lab. (need to be improved).	Activities related to study or iconography of sculptures or treasure hunt-exploration programs can be introduced as museum has

				enough space to move around in galleries on different floors.
4.	Government Museum, Ahar-Udaipur, Rajasthan	Excavated material of Ahar site	Museum brochure (need to be improved).	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and communication value.
5.	Goa State Museum, Panaji	Sculptures of regional-excavated sites	Museum brochure (need to be improved).	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and communication value.
6.	Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Orissa	Sculptures of regional sites	Museum brochure (need to be improved).	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and communication value.
7.	Archaeological Museum, Amravati, Andhra Pradesh	Remnants of Buddhist stupa (reconstructed)	Museum brochure, photos, maps, replica, (need to be improved).	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and communication value.
8.	Archaeological Museum, Chandragiri (Raja Mahal, Chandragiri fort), Andhra	Stone sculptures	Museum, brochure, audio visual corner and sound & light show (good).	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and communication value.

	Pradesh			
9.	Archaeological Museum, Velha Goa	Prehistoric display on evolution, Sculptures	Children activity area, TV for documentaries (good).	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and communication value.
10.	Archaeological Museum, Nagarjunakonda , Andhra Pradesh	Remnants of Buddhist stupa	Touch screen. (need to be improved)	Guided tours in museum and site can add to the interpretation and communication value.
11.	Archaeological Museum, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh	Excavation material of site, sculptures of Buddhist pantheon	Museum brochure, Touch screens. (need to be improved)	Guided tours in museum and site can add to the interpretation and communication value.
12.	Archaeological Museum, Thanesar (Kurukshetra), Haryana	Excavation material of site	Museum brochure (need to be improved)	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and communication value. The excavated material displayed can be described in booklet form for a specific collection.
13.	Fort St. George Museum, Chennai, Tamil	Coins	Audio visual corner and TV, regular activity	Guided tours can add to the interpretation and

	Nadu		programs (good).	communication value.
14.	Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, Maharashtra	Pre- and proto-history gallery	Audio visual aids and interactive kiosks, discovery kits and corners, regular collection based activity programs (excellent).	Museum is versatile in conducting programs, and variety of activities.
15.	Deccan College Post- Graduate and Research Institute Museum, Pune, Maharashtra	Stratigraphic (reconstructed) display of Nevasa	Tours for visitors –on request (need to be improved).	Programs based on collection and trips to archaeological sites can be introduced as a regular feature for children.

From this survey it has been found that archaeological collection is significantly displayed among various museums in India but the interpretation programs pertaining to archaeology is not a common phenomena in museums. Some museums introduced technology and awareness programs to publicise the essence of collection thereby increasing the turn up ratio or footfall of visitors. Audio visual aids, CDs, touch screens or mobile apps enhance the interest factor in the display thereby increasing the retention time of a visitor. Archaeology could be utilized for education needs, young people are more likely to grow up and vote for, and contribute toward, archaeology's needs (Jameson & Baugher 2007).