

SUMMARY

ROLE OF MUSEUM EDUCATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL LEARNING IN INDIA

The research thesis is an outcome of the effort by the researcher to know how the archaeological collections housed in various museums across India could be used as a source of education especially learning about culture and heritage. Museums can be rightly said as adjuncts to formal educational institutions that cover every possible field of knowledge through its myriad collections and archaeology being no exception to it. Museums have the potential to bring change in educational inputs and supplements in the country which may aid in overall development of children for enhancing knowledge about cultural wealth.

The development of museums in India dates as long back as 1784 with the inception of Asiatic Society of Bengal. Subsequently in 1814 it was established as the first museum of India dealing with archaeology, ethnology and technology. It was only since 1861, in formation of Archaeological Survey of India that archaeology came to the fore in the museum. It is evident from the foregoing that present-day India has different types of archaeological museums, controlled and financed by different categories of administrative bodies ranging from the Central Government to temple- committees. There has been a majority of archaeological collection across museums of India as nation has rich past dated almost 5000 years in antiquity that comprise of artefacts from almost every part of country.

The objectives of research were to estimate the presentation of archaeological heritage in museums and its current utilization as a source of education. The study emphasised on effective learning experiences suiting to the collection of selected museums in India and to see the interactive methods that are employed to attract different segments of visitors towards museums with archaeological collections. Survey of selected/representative museums of different administrative setups, was done for research. This generated data related to the existing potential of the museums and wherever there is absence of regular programs, the best possible use of collection for the learning purpose has been explored and suggested. The practical outcomes achieved or activities executed on the basis of survey, aided in checking the effectiveness of display and collection.

Chapters were formulated as a series of connecting links initiating from chapter one that focused on the aspect of museum as a resource centre for archaeological learning. The research tools and data collected were put into chapter two that emphasised on the collection surveyed and summary of sources and services available at different museums. The third chapter presents empirical case studies conducted by researcher at national & regional level museums and non-governmental organizations in India. Chapter four is an overview of archaeological collection in selected museums of India where in an effort was made to survey and showcase the vastness of regional collections and highlighting the museums' strength to formulate strategies to promote and popularise displays. The final chapter was based on discussion on findings of the study and conclusion of overall works conducted by researcher.

The research is an effort to emphasise on the inclusion of archaeology as a significant field of study at school level. The youth are enthusiastic to participate and learn if they get a hands on approach to see, touch, experience, interpret object at their own time and in their own comfort zone. Children learn through experiences which last a lifetime. Sensitizing towards archaeology should be developed from this stage when they are in schools. Museums in India have collections that hold stories which reflect the 5000 year old past of this region. Study of land and people, food, clothing, shelter, animals, beliefs and values all reflect the continuity of traditions from past to present. The present generation may even adopt a site, with initiative of local authority or school, and be promoter of the significant aspects of that region. This creates a snowball effect for future generations, as many museums and collection is under threat, and may be lost if not properly preserved or taken care of. Archaeology is the only surviving tool that may aid in preserving this invaluable heritage for posterity. Research was an initiative that showed effectiveness of practical participatory approach in developing sensitization towards archaeology even at school level.

The suggestions, resource pack and activities executed or suggested through this research is an initiative that may be replicated in every museum in the country that has archaeological collection. As rightly quoted by Winston Churchill that "A nation that forgets past has no future". The lessons hidden in mysteries of past can be learnt and explored through archaeology and this was noteworthy aim for current research study.