

## ABSTRACT

The present work is a study of "Dangi Culture Through Museums". It deals with a study of different museum activities, functions, and different levels of ethnographic museums in India housing Dangi cultural materials. Museology being interdisciplinary attempts are made to combine museum studies with tribal ethnography, prehistoric archaeology, ethno-history, ethnology and folklore.

The collection management discussed in this thesis should prove evolutionary in respect of Dangi cultural materials. It has been shown that all museum duties and responsibilities are interdependent. Full emphasis is placed on documentation simultaneous with fieldwork and collection. A fundamental change in the object-oriented museum approach is also found in the museums of India. In the Dangs also isolated objects were given much museum attention. As a result, it is possible to find them in museums but it is not easy to find the "people" of the Dangs represented in all their cultural behaviour or performances. One of the conclusions of this thesis is the need to re-orient museum responsibilities to the "people" not "things" of the Dangs including everyday life and seasonal life cycle of the Dangs. The idea is to emphasize the rich but simple ways of the communities to live in harmony with nature. Not only other communities can get inspiration from Dangi example but their talent and traditional skills will be appreciated. There is need to avoid distortions, overemphasis or omissions of the ethnographically most significant aspects, because once a theme or a community is represented in a museum, it is taken as the scientific reality for future reference. What is concluded is the growing need of representing Dangi life in all its richness by going beyond "Show-case-oriented", or "Gallery-Lecturer-dependent" interpretation.

Serving the public in educational sense is more important than offering popular or exciting displays for entertainment. Museums should not place the traditional communities under glass as tourists' attractions. Good museums should make all their audience aware of the social reality. It is emphasized in this thesis that the objects when, out of context, lose their cultural significance. Presenting objects as representative of a cultural context is the present challenge before museums dealing with the Dangi culture. Such objects should become part in a three-dimensional story about the Dangis and their ways of life. Sufficient discussion is made in this thesis on the dangers of de-contextualization out of ignorance and neglect. That is an insult to the Dangi people.

The Dangi "community museums" as recommended in this thesis can rely on simpler, local material and skills to provide the context to cultural objects. For this reason, the role of demonstration especially by the local volunteers is emphasized in this thesis because not only the medium is affordable but it encourages community identification.

Being a museological study initial part of the Thesis is devoted to define and describe terms like museum, quasi-museum, galleries, centres, and to discuss the relationship between museums, museology or museum studies with special reference to the ethnography. Where it was necessary some historical background is given to understand how these concepts are accepted professionally. Also an outline is presented of the institutions in India where relevant data on Dangi ethnography and museology are available for research purposes.

To build a case-study, a lot of fieldwork was carried out side by side very fruitful discussion-meetings with those scholars who were acquainted with Dangi culture not only theoretically but also through personal visits and involvement in their cultural expressions. To be able to present a holistic view of the Dangi culture attempts are made to discuss politico-economical, social-ethnographical environmental aspects. The Dangi material culture, rites of passage, seasonal custom, religious beliefs and rituals, relationship between family members and between different occupational groups are presented in this thesis. By that, it has become clear what is meant by Dangi cultural heritage, ways of life and world-view which museums are expected to document and interpret in appropriate ways. Full use is made of all relevant published or unpublished studies as found in research institutes in addition to data collected in fieldwork for two years in different seasons. The known information had to be cross-checked and/or updated and the result is submitted in this thesis. The past merges into the present in practically all ways of Dangi life and both need to be presented in museums, special attention is paid to the material culture and non-material heritage illustrating day to day and collective life on community level.

In the light of the above subject of museum collection, ethnographic collection, various current practices and also norms have been covered with plenty of references to various classes of materials and media or techniques found in the Dangs. Actual collections in Indian museums are used as examples in discussing the museum methods.

Some of the weaknesses in current museum practices are in the area of documentation which alone makes acquired ethnographical material usable in museum exhibition, education and research. The current professional norms are applied to the

work in relation to Dangi cultural materials. Anticipating demands for data, museums are preparing to turn to the use of the computer-assisted databanks. These new trends are also discussed so as to make information on Dangi material culture accessible all over India.

The potentiality of exhibitions as a medium is discussed in the context of Dangi materials. Different situations in museums need creative adaptations or applications of the principles and practices. The changes from object-oriented to theme-oriented and concept-based as well as contextual approach are described so as to explain the corresponding changes in the museum strategies and techniques. Many illustrations in the form of prints and sketches are included to support the theoretical discussion. Similarly the educational work is also discussed elaborately. Special attention is given to the various alternative choices which are available to museums but each needs special preparation to be useful in the interpretation of original Dangi theme or material. Interpretation is successful if communication is effective which involves museum audiences. That aspect is receiving much attention in modern museology and also received in this thesis. How museums can use modern technology especially electronics is also explained. Museum-school cooperation is also discussed in addition to the ways in which other mass media can be used for achieving museum objectives. All museum functions are interrelated. So in this thesis technical, practical, methodological information is related to the primary aims of the institutions of selective collection for presentation and interpretation. Each community is unique in cultural heritage and world-view. Mechanical approach to its interpretation is bound to fail. Elaborate discussion is made in the thesis to emphasize the creative and positive approach to museum interpretation.