

Glimpse of the Tribal Museum: A Rich Cultural Heritage of Utkal University

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Abstract: In the arena of Indian Universities, the Utkal University has been considered as the mother of all the Universities in Odisha. There are 27 Post Graduate teaching and reasearch Department's in the Utkal University Campus in various disciplines of Science, Humanities, Social Sciences, Law, Business Administration and Commerce. The Post- Graduate Department of Anthropology, one of the oldest department of the Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. It was established in 1958 about one and half decades later the establishment of the Utkal University, Odisha. As an integral part the departmental Anthropology Museum was set up since the initiation of the Department of Anthropology. The museum in the Department has been build up in view of academic purpose to with the practical training to the Department students with the help of museum specimens and also utilize them for various field of researches. This anthropological museum of Post-Graduate department of Anthropology in Utkal University is one among some of Departmental University Museums of India which is open to public on every working day. Although this Departmental University Museums of India which is open to public on every working days. Although this departmental university museum, in its beginning was established in a small way, now it has developed and innovated to a well-organized museum. It has grown through gifts, donations, purchases and fieldwork expedition and visit of different areas.

Keywords: Anthropology, Expedition, Humanities, Integral, Museum

Received : 11 June 2021

Revised : 24 July 2021

Accepted : 16 August 2021

Published : 2 September 2021

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Naik, S.K. (2021). Glimpse of the Tribal Museum: A Rich Cultural Heritage of Utkal University, *Society and Culture Development in India*, 1: 1, pp. 117-128

Introduction

The Museums has been considered as an institution. It tells us the story of man all over the world. The word museum has been derived from the Greek word *Mouseion* which means the seat of Muses. The name museum indicates a temple of Muses. In Greek mythology, Muses were the daughter of Zeus, the Greek Jupiter. They were

born in Pieria at the foot of Mount Olympus - the Mountain Of Gods. Nine of them were regarded as the divinities who presided over arts and science. We find the word museum used in its original sense in the Alexandrian 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.

Meaning and Definition of Museum

Museums symbolise the place where objects, either man made or natural are collected, preserved and displayed and through them knowledge spreads. The definition of Museum as adopted in the 5th UNESCO Regional Seminar explains clearly the meaning and work of a museum.

It states:-

“The museum is an institution which functions through its exhibits , research projects and planned activities as a cultural centre within a community. Serving in both an educational and integrative capacity its major objectives are the preservation of the history and individuality of the community which it accomplishes while simultaneously discovering, protecting, diffusing and sponsoring universal human values. Located in specific place within a structure housing its collections, laboratories and exhibits the museum functions under a wide and general programme of educations, artistic and recreational activities. The museum serves on a local, regional or national level an actual and potential, transient or localised , segment of the public and constitute centripetal cultural force for the better integration of the community”

International Council of Museum (ICOM) in its general conference held at Copenhagen in 1974 has adopted a definition of Museum as:

“A museum is a non-profit making permanent institution in the services of the societies, conserves, researches, communities and exhibits, for the purpose of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of humankind and its development”

History of Museum in India

The museums came into being for the reasons of showing the treasures collected first by the individuals, naturally the affluent individuals and later by the societies or associations of the learned scholars. Museum at Alexandria has been considered as

the first museum to be established in world around 283 B.C. The materials in the Alexandria museum were collected during the conquest of Alexander the Great.

In India, the hindi term for Museum is Ajayabghar or Jadughar and now a days it is known as Sangrahalaya. In the early times in India we found the reference of Chitrasalas or art- galleries in the Sanskrit literature. In those Chitrasalas paintings and other decorative objects were exhibited. Besides Chitrasalas, Royal Portrait Gallery (Kosal period), Alekhagriha (paint, write or describe), Deva Kula (statues of Gods were placed) were found in India in ancient times.

In the early 19th century the Asiatic Society of Bengal was established in 1784 in Calcutta. The main reason behind the establishment of the Asiatic Society was to conduct inquiries to whatever is performed by Man or produced by Nature and thus Sir William Jones, the founder of the Society collected rare antiquities. In 1796 it was decided that antiquities or materials should be kept in a house for future reference, so Dr N. Wallich, offered himself as to serve as the Curator of the Asiatic Museum. It was Dr. Wallich proposal, thus Indian Museum was founded in the year 1814. After Indian Museum the Madras Literary society which, was also a part of Asiatic Society of London decided to have a Museum in Madras. So Madras Museum was established in 1851. Besides many Museum were also set up the southern cities like Bangalore, Teruchinaplli, Bellary, Coimbatore and many more. The Grand Medical College Museum is one of the oldest medical museum in the country established in the year 1843 at Bombay. In 1857 Dr. Brist founded the Museum of Economic products in Bombay. Later this museum was controlled by military and the building available for Victoria and Albert Museum in 1871. And many more Museum were established like Lucknow Museum(1863) Central Museum, Nagpur(1863), Mysore Museum(1865), Mathura Museum(1874, Raipur Museum(1875). During 1887 in India, the Queen Victoria's Silver Jubille celebration gave the opportunity to open some more Museums at places like Baroda, Jaipur, RaJkot, Vijayawada and the Victoria Technical Institute Museum at Madras.

After the Ancient Monument Act was passed in 1904, several site and local museums were established within the year 1902-1912 under Archaeological Survey of India. These museums were established at cities like Ajmer, Baripada, Chamba, Johdpur, Khajuraho, Gwalior, Bijapur, Allahabad and at city of Sarnath. The Wales Museum Bombay was started in 1904 but the building of the Museum was completed in 1914 but started functioning from 1921 after 1st World War. Other opened in the 20th century were Patna Museum (1917), Nalanda Museum (1917) Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi (1919) Victoria Memorial Hall (1921), Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar(1932) and Assam State Museum, Guwahati(1940).

After Independence, the Government of India has taken a lot of steps to open many new museums in different parts of the country. Museums like National Museum, New Delhi (1949), Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad (1951), Crafts Museum, New Delhi (1952), National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (1954), National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi, Gandhi Museum, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi and National Museum of Man, Bhopal. Tribal Museum (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar

Besides many new museums were established in Eastern and North Eastern India. All museums of Arunachal Pradesh were found in 1956. These were located at Along Bondila, Khonsa, Pasighat, Shilong, Tezu and Ziro. The Manipur state museum at Imphal has also started functioning in 1969, the Meghalaya Zonal Anthropological Museum, Shillong (1954), Tribal Research Institute Museum, Shilong (1974) and many more.

Anthropological Museum

India is a land of diverse socio-cultural settings having many religions, languages and cultural traditions. Museums in our country, have an important role to play in making the people aware of its richness and diversity. Museums of Anthropology occupy a special place among the museums of the world. Having their origins in the early fascination of the West with the exotic cultures of the societies, they have become, for the general public, centers of information on those cultures, some of which, of course, no longer exist, while almost all have changed dramatically as a result of Western industrial influences (Renolds, 1989: 11).

Anthropology is committed to holistic study of biological and cultural aspects of man. It covers the entire range of social and cultural experience of man and it includes all categories of human groups whether tribal, rural, urban, ancient or modern. Though it's possible to present the unity and diversity of Indian cultures in an Anthropological museum in most appropriate manner, Anthropological museum function with collection of man's cultural achievements, his inventions etc. Due to industrialization, improved communication and urbanization, there is marked change in the life of the tribal and rural population, especially in developing countries. So it has been felt that unless the material culture of the tribal and rural population are collected and preserved, there will be no trace of them in future.

Museums have moved far away from the 'store house' phase. A museum is not an assemblage of scattered isolated objects: its purpose is to collect and present objects against the background of the cultural and social settings, A museum, in

effect, is one medium of reproduction of history. World over museums have seen four kinds of transition:

1. From a simple repository of objects to that of an educational medium.
2. From an emphasis on isolated objects to an integrated presentation of objects.
3. From the privilege of the few to the service of many, and
4. From passive to an active participant in the social and cultural life.

Anthropological museum are the best place where the various groups like tribal, folk and urban can be best represented through their cultural objects. And thus the museum with all those exhibits surely develops the knowledge of any person about the tribes, caste and any other groups.

Thus according to Dr. Sachin Roy the word mirror is very appropriate for Anthropological Museums.

He quotes:

“This mirror is nothing but a ‘museum’ when talking in terms of culture. This mirror can give to a visitor a reflection of his own self and his culture, thus stimulate his thought process as also know himself, his people and his country in a very wide perspective”

Museums like all social institutions have changed overtime. They have changed in form, in function and in the basic approach. Museums have thus emerged as vibrant institutions providing a link between the present and past. Now, museums are trying more and more for providing such kind of quality services which gives quality of experience in every aspect to the users (visitors). Generating awareness, dissemination of knowledge or education is the prime focus of all the museums today.

Museum in Department of Anthropology

The Post-Graduate Department of Anthropology, one of the oldest department of the Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. It was established in 1958 about one and half decades later the establishment of the Utkal University, Odisha. As an integral part the Departmental Anthropology Museum was established since the inception of the Department of Anthropology. This Department started functioning in two residential quarters in 1958 and it was founded and headed by an eminent museologist Prof. A. Aiyapan, Former Director of Madras Museum. So it was he who took interest and initiative to collect Anthropological specimens and started a small museum.



Plate 1: The entrance of the Cultural Museum



Plate-2: Hunting, Fishing and Subsistence implement Galleries



Plate 3: Garment gallery and the lower section is the gallery of household articles



Plate-4: Galleries dedicated to Dhokra craft

The Department was shifted to the new University campus at Vani Vihar in 1962 and a big room was dedicated for displaying the Anthropological specimens collected. Later in 1972 the Department was shifted to its new building, three big halls were dedicated to the three sections of the museum i.e Cultural Anthropology, Prehistoric Archaeology and Physical Anthropology. In the Cultural Anthropology section hunting, fishing, agricultural implements, dress, ornaments and other household articles of tribal areas of Odisha were collected and displayed. The Prehistoric Archaeology section has perhaps the largest collections of prehistoric tools in any Anthropology department in India. These artifacts have been arranged in chronological sequence i.e from Palaeolithic to the metal age. In the Physical Anthropology section has plaster casts of original fossils representing the various

stages of human evolution. The aspects of Physical Anthropology such as evolution of human, study of anthropometry, human growth, nutrition and health, forensic anthropology etc, have been displayed in the section through charts, models and photographs. There was a well established Museology laboratory with fumigation chambers and other instruments and apparatus for conservation of specimens of the museum. The Department Museum has been established in view of academic purpose to impart practical training to the Anthropology students with the help of museum specimens and also utilize them for various fields of researches. This Anthropological Museum in Utkal University is one of Departmental University Museums of India which is open to public on every working day. This Anthropological Museum, in its beginning was established in a small way, now it has developed and innovated to a well-organized museum. It has grown through gifts, donations, purchases and fieldwork expedition and visit of different areas. The Departmental Anthropological Museum has three segments such as Prehistoric Archaeology, Biological Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology.



Plate 5: Varieties of Measuring Pots displayed in the gallery

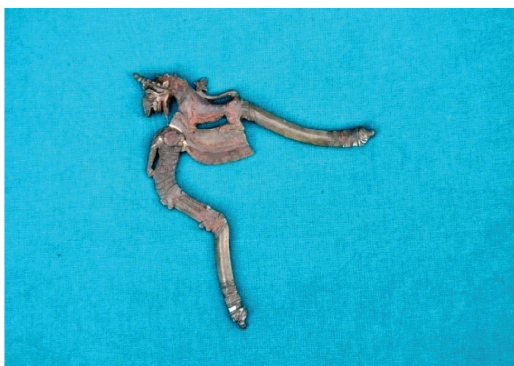


Plate 6: Tribal ornament gallery

The sections in this museum are well arranged as far as possible following the principles of display and arrangements in Museology. Every sections has great educative value in their own rights of collection and display. But the cultural Museum is recently innovated and well-arranged and displayed. It has more than 1100 specimens of different categories, different materials and different ethnics (tribal and folk) group of Odisha. It also has some collections from outside the state. Altogether 482 numbers of specimens have been displayed in the museum and rest collections are in museum storage.

Some Unique Collections in the Museum

The collection material of the Anthropological museum includes the material culture of all the ethnic groups of India. Anthropological specimens are mainly made up of composite (both organic and non-organic) materials, For example. fishing implements of different varieties are mainly made of bamboo and cane stripes, sometime bones and iron pieces can also be found to be used. Arms and weapons are mainly made of wood and iron. We find raw jute, cotton, silk feather and cane leather. etc. have been used for making dress and head gear. Ornaments are mainly made of iron, bel-metal, brass, lead Ivory lac, cane etc. Domestic implements are mainly made of bel-metal brass, wood, bamboo, leafs of the tree. cocoanut shell, iron, etc So considering the various types of materials mentioned above, it can be said that the anthropological specimens are mainly composite in nature.



**Plate 7: Guakati – Betel nut cutter (Brass)
from Balakati-Puri**



**Plate 8: Jhinka- Porcupine
(Bell-Metal) of Kondh Tribe**

The uniqueness of Plate 7- is an unique betel nut cutter having a lion head design whereas Plate8- is used as a dowry article in the Kondh society. The antiquities in this museum are displayed in eighteen well lighted show- cases under sections like hunting, fishing, agricultural implements, weapons of defense and offence, basketry, musical instruments, dress and ornaments and household articles of tribal and rural areas of Odisha. Besides terracotta and other sculptures made of stone and woods of different gods and goddess of Odisha are also displayed.

This typical ornament in Plate 9- is a very costly and rare. The main function behind making and using this ornament is: it was noticed in the kondh society that newly married girls run away to their fathers house due to some reason or other. The bride asked to were this heavy ornament in the hand which restrict her movement. And the ornament has a unique locking system which the girl cannot open. The



Plate 9: Khadu- Hand Ornament (Bell-Metal) Soara Tribe of Kutia

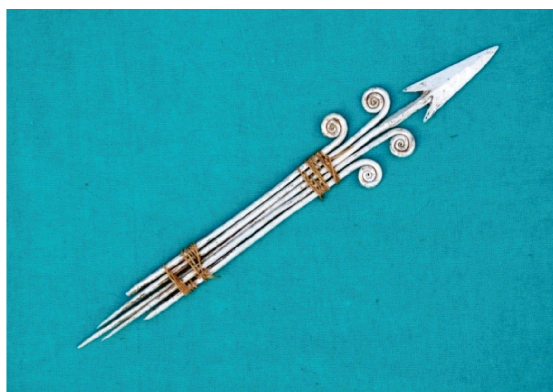


Plate 10: Hair Pin (Aluminium) used by the girls of Kondh Tribe

above particular hair pin in Plate 10- is used the Soara girls. As it is visible this pin is designed such that it can be used both in hair and for self defence of the girl while moving around the jungle

This cultural section has some unique collection such as Iron swords of Paika's of Medieval Odisha, a huge cutting implement (sword category) a Dao from Assam, a Khadu (Hand Ornament) used by the Kondh women and its weight is 8 kgs and also there are various unique ornaments on silver and brass and beads of glass of different primitive tribes of Odisha. Besides the museum has a Guakati (Betel nut cutter) made of brass with a lion head design. And there are a lot more unique antiquities in the museum. The recent attraction of the museum are the three human skeletal remains such as a adult male, adult female and perinatal child of the Chalcolithic period excavated from Bang-Harirajpur, Puri have been preserved and displayed since 2013.

Activities of the Museum

Workshops are organized on various themes from time to time by different museums in India for preservation and promotion of indigenous knowledge, social awareness, education and training.

Two workshops were conducted on skeletal remains in collaboration with Deccan college, Pune in 2013 and 2014. The skeleton was excavated from Bang-Harirajpur, Puri district. It was under the Direction of Prof. Kishor K. Basa in collaboration with Department of Anthropology, Utkal University and Deccan college, Pune (Plate- 11). Two workshops were conducted on conservation of



Plate 11: Press meet of the Workshop on Skeletal Remain in Department Museum in March 2013



Plate 12: Workshop on Conservation of Ethnographic Specimens in 2013

Ethnographic specimens have been conducted in 2012 and 2013 under the auspices of the Departmental Museum workshops in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal. These workshops provided the Hands- on- training on conservation of Ethnographic specimens to the faculties, museum personals, and research scholars of Utkal Universities and State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Workshop – cum – Exhibition on “ Brass and Bell Metal Craft Traditions of Odisha” organised by P.G. Department of Anthropology, UGC- Centre of Advanced Study, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, from 14th – 16th November 2017. In this workshop a craftsman name Pabitra Kumar Maharana of bell metal was called and he has given some training to the participants upon how to put designs on the bell metal utensils. And the Department is looking forward



Plate 13: Students participation on Conservation of Ethnographic Specimen workshop



Plate 14: Prof. K.K Basa discussing about the importance of Museum to the school students

conduct more Seminar and workshop related museum in future. The Museum has never been restricted to the interested public and foreign scholars to visit in ordinary days.

Every year a large number of school and college students and general public including faculty members and scholars of our own university and other universities and different colleges, visit the museum in special occasions like exhibitions opened in foundation day of the department and workshop's and seminar's conducted. Though the museum is small, but it is a repository of many unique ethnographic specimens collected from Odisha in particular and Eastern India in general. Enriched with a large number of valuable collections it functions as an aid to impart education in Anthropology and extends immense help to the scholars in anthropological, ethnographic and ethno archaeological researches. Obviously it collects cultural material and exhibits them with principles and methods of museology.



Plate 15: School Students visit to the Cultural Museum



Plate 16: The Soara tribe painting

Concluding Remarks

Museums are the true custodians of our heritage and are a way to recourse of education and culture. Many of the artistic creations have already been destroyed by human vandalism, natural disaster, fire and war. What remains had to be preserved at all cost by the anthropological museums, so that the future generations may have access to the past archaeological and ethnological works. It is a recognized fact that the development of the science of anthropology has been facilitated by the growth of ethnographical, ethnological and culture-history museums (Gautam, 1969; Urry, 1972) Anthropological museums enable its regional /national bio-cultural heritage

to be recognized, significantly in culturally and naturally vulnerable regions and communities.

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