

# Challenges of Interpretation and Communication in the Museums of India : A Critical Overview

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## ABSTRACT

Museum signifies man's utilization of ultimate surroundings through exhibition or exhibited objects for understanding of mankind. It is not just an educational institution; it's a source of academic motivation and amusement. Museums have a key task to play in providing an understanding of identity and sense of belonging to a place or community. The time of vast extension in the World and often painful cultural change in many countries, Museum can provide a valuable sense of connection with the past and present, and serve as an exemplary for the future. So it's necessary to understand that the Museum can effectively respond for fulfilling the public's needs and requirements by their Collections or Objects, and without the proper Communication, the purpose must not be fulfilled. Every individual is distinct, they come with their different and own interest, but the fact is, in the countries like India where the percentage of literacy is unfortunately low. In these circumstances, the first task is looking at how we can educate through the museum we must see that as many people as possible can recognise museum for what it is. The biggest challenge facing today's museums is proper interpretation and communication through their collection. So the aims of this paper to identify the present problems are facing in the museums of India and to create a proper bridge between visitors and objects.

**Keywords:** Indian Museums, Communication, Interpretation, Display, Visitors.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Museum signifies man's utilization of ultimate surroundings through exhibition or exhibited objects for understanding of mankind (Smita : 1983 :22; Jain : 1984 : 158)

M- Man's (Taken as the Homo Sapiens)

U-Utilization/Ultimate (Primary, Fundamental)

S-Surroundings (Environment-dynamic and static)

E-Exhibitions(of the selection from Collection/Exhibited)

M-Mankind (The Masses)

The term *Communication* is derived from the Latin word 'Communis' which means Common. That means a common group of understanding establishes when a person Communicates with another. 'Communication is an exchange facts, ideas, opinion or emotions by two or more persons'. Interpretation is a bridge of meaning and a continuous process of telling, listening and understanding. In a Museum, the process of

Communication is held in between receiver and resources of information through objects. It is not just an educational institutions, it's a source of intellectual stimulation and amusement. In the modern sense a Museum is an institution, actively devoted to the task of communicating the World of man and nature. Museum exhibits have much to communicate, but they are unfruitful unless they are made to speak to human beings.

Museums have a key task to play in providing an understanding of identity and sense of belonging to a place or community. The time of vast extension in the World and often painful cultural change in many Countries, Museum can provide a valuable sense of connection with the past and present, and serve as an admonitory for the future. The value of Museum has changed through time as political and cultural values have altered and developed. The progress and achievements of Country's and its historical development also reflecting from their Collections and unique resource, so it's necessary to understand that the

Museum can effectively respond for fulfilling the public's needs and requirements by their Collections or Objects, and without the proper *Communication*, the purpose must not be fulfilled.

## II. ANALYSIS

In Britain different theory of Communication developed in different times on different aspects by the experts or researchers. Roger Miles used a Communication model from "Information Technology", "Mass Com Theory" and also learning from "Behaviourist Psychology" of audience. For a Museum the mission should be always connected the Collection with the Visitors, so that more attention need to be paid on them. Before 1990's exhibitions were designed for "general public", but after a long research the concept of "target audience" was came out from market research techniques which is first time applied in the Museum context in Britain, and also for this reason the first time Museum became to more open, more democratic and more focused on audiences and their needs to decide who its target audience is to be.

In the under-development countries, however, even today, museum is considered merely as repository of cultural heritage. It can only supplement the curricular teaching and thus it is nothing more than an auxiliary to our schools, colleges and universities. In the countries like India, where percentage of literacy is unfortunately low, nearly 70 percent of the people live in the rural areas and a very substantial proportion of them do not get proper education and they have a low reading capacity. In this situation the Indian museums fail to connect with maximum number of visitors. So the authority of museum must be alert when they arrange a temporary and permanent exhibition. For unlettered people visual method of education is the most effective means and this will have a lasting impression in the minds of the lay public. Museum specimens act as 'feelings' and feel, thus experienced through handling, fills the hiatus of leaning, to make it as much comprehensive as possible. Though 'seeing is believing', yet touching and feeling are even more effective than merely having a look. Still in many places of India, visits to museum are an activity of luxury and wastage of working time and money. To make them conscious, museum should arrange

travelling exhibition to make people conscious and take an initiative of museo-buses.

On the other hand, every individual is distinct; they come with their different and own interest. Here face to face communication process is needed. In this process, a series of symbols can help to make effective communication (like words, signs etc.) it may also take place through physical gesture and body language, non-verbal language, vocal cues, create an atmosphere of openness etc.

- ✓ A Comfortable atmosphere is essential which can be attentive to the number of interruptions, and it will be better to avoid a busy area for communication and keep the focus on the listener.
- ✓ Good listening skills and showing a genuine interest are attributes of a successful communicator.
- ✓ If the receiver is not sure that the person said, ask him or her to repeat it.
- ✓ Get to the Point: - Show value for people's time by being as concise as possible when giving information. It must not be lengthy.
- ✓ Let other talk: - Communicator should keep the other person in mind giving him or her chance to be a part of the conversation.
- ✓ Vocal Cues :- The listener will lose interest in what communicator is saying and will become bored if he uses excessive "filler words".

Inside a museum, concept of display on exhibition or a proper communication framework is totally dependent on a proper planning, which is one of the most important functions of in management of museum in India. Effective communication is equally important in exacting the plans through organizing, staffing and directing and controlling the organizational activities with the left of a feedback system. Not only by the labeling of the object, it has to use pictorial method of publicity, suitable pictorial slides based on the important and attractive exhibits of museums of the locality are prepared and shown at cinema houses and pictorial posters displayed at prominent places in the city and various places in Museum. It also holds popular and interesting concerts and also gives free film shows at the museum for the public. The important collection of the museum can also highlight form the press notes, and

short notices and announcements are got inserted in the daily or weekly papers. This helps the interested public in keeping it informed at the day to day activities of the museum. A more intelligence way of keeping the people's mind, that is advertisement, which displays a classification of certain appropriate museum exhibits, in photographic reproduction with descriptive headings. It can be a suggestive approach of how people can spend their holiday and spare time by paying a visit to the museum, the attractive advertisement must be displayed at the places where they may easily catch the eye of the people. e.g. - Railway Station, Hotels, Airports, Post Offices, important crossing roads of city etc.

Australia-based museologist and conservator Vinod Daniel has been working on restoration projects in India and in several other countries for a while now. According to his view, India museums need the right staffing. Most staff in museums here do not have the capacity to be part of the museum, because they do not have the proper training. He also said 'It is very important that they appoint a permanent director. Across the country, most museums don't have a director'. He also wanted to prefer and merge the intangible heritage with the museum to enhance the curiosities of the visitors. He said – 'At this point I don't think from a museum side we have an edge. But we do have an edge on the intangible heritage part where museums are not involved. If you look at our dance forms and art forms; that is what the whole world comes here to see. Museums in India are incorporating very little of that. They need to find a way that objects can connect with dance forms and history. For instance, there might be a range of textiles that a museum has collected, but they no longer exist at present anymore. They might be able to bring in the community that produced it originally to recreate it again.'

The early museums were established by the efforts of society, later on it was left to the Government. But presently, in India, here are few Museums which owe their existence to private individuals or societies and even this directly or indirectly, are supported by the Government. In the U.S. where the museums are so very active and public participation is much more than in India, on private support only. Now the problem is the delay of decision making that is why difficult to establish proper management in a museum as a result; the authority or the director or curator can't serve the

proper messages through proper exhibition and failed to communicate with society. Some museums were open by the princely society of the society in the time of post independence most of these are housed in old palaces and some others in new buildings. In the time of museum movement, it was a very healthy tread in the museums of India. But in recent times they may not remain active because the lack of funds.

The other field which has been so far neglected in Indian museums is World Art. There are only new museums which have example of foreign art its necessary to collect and display the art of other countries, so that museums could be benefited with that type of collection and also the scholars and students can easily distinguished that art of our country and other countries. So hat communication between different countries can be possible through art as well as museum. In India, minimum galleries and museums showing Indian sculptures up to a particular period. So this gives an impression that art activities stopped after that periods. Museums have to collect contemporary art for serving proper messages related to prevent situation of the society and culture. To make people conscious of the vast heritage provided by nature, because India is quite rich in natural resources, so the communication process between man and nature can possible through natural history museums. It's necessary to understand the nature, and a museum can create an atmosphere, from which receiver can take the proper provision.

### III. CONCLUSION

India of today is changing fast. The change is visible in every aspect of our life' so it's a high to me that a serious thinking is given to check out a constructive and dynamic programme for future rule of India. Needs to open more museums in India and raising the standard of those are already existing, so that it can be attractive for general public of our country. If the Indian museums stop collecting the object, the result is that the collection of Indian Art almost will land in other countries by the time there will be nothing left for us to obtain for Indian Museums. So museum should objects related to our past and must be communicate with society through display, and also increase the knowledge for future generation. After collection and preservation comes the exhibition. In order to make object accessible to the common man

it's essential that these should be exhibited. Otherwise knowledge of the object will remain limited to a few scholars only. Exhibition is the only way of making an instructive use of art objects. It must be attracting and it makes people come again & again to make use museum objects. The main difference between school and museum is that museums are wide open to individual exploration outside the restrictive framework of a clear room or a curriculum of special effort to make learning attractive, even fun. Here the objects are the principal educational tools of museum. So the museum has to communicate with the school for increasing their knowledge and make it attractive, thus students can visit again and again in museums.

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