

1. National Museum, Delhi- Indian Museum, Calcutta

Dr. A. Ravisankar

National Museum

The National Museum, New Delhi, as we see it today, has an interesting beginning. The blueprint for establishing the National Museum in Delhi was prepared by the Maurice Gwyer Committee in May 1946. An Exhibition of Indian Art, consisting of selected artefacts from various museums of India was organized by the Royal Academy, London with the cooperation of Government of India and Britain. The Exhibition went on display in the galleries of Burlington House, London during the winter months of 1947-48. It was decided to display the same collection in Delhi, before the return of exhibits to their respective museums. An exhibition was organized in the the Rashtrapati Bhawan (President's residence), New Delhi in 1949, which turned out to be a great success. This event proved responsible for the creation of the National Museum.

The success of this Exhibition led to the idea that advantage should be taken of this magnificent collection to build up the nucleus collection of the National Museum. State Governments, Museum authorities and private donors, who had participated in the exhibition, were approached for the gift or loan of artefacts, and most of them responded generously.

On August 15, 1949, the National Museum, New Delhi, was inaugurated in the Rashtrapati Bhawan by Shri R.C. Rajagopalachari, the Governor-General of India. The foundation of the present building was laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, on May 12, 1955. The first phase of the National Museum building was formally inaugurated by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Vice President of India, on December 18, 1960. The second phase of the building was completed in 1989.

While the Museum continued to grow its collection through gifts that were sought painstakingly, artefacts were collected through its Arts Purchase Committee. The Museum presently holds approximately 2,00,000 objects of diverse nature, both Indian as well as foreign, and its holdings cover a time span of more than five thousand years of Indian cultural heritage.

Indian Museum

The history of the origin and the growth of the Indian Museum is one of the remarkable events towards the development of heritage and culture of India. Founded in 1814 at the cradle of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (at the present building of the Asiatic Society, 1 Park Street, Kolkata), Indian Museum is the earliest and the largest multipurpose Museum not only in the Indian subcontinent but also in the Asia-Pacific region of the world.

The movement, which was started in 1814, in fact was the beginning of a significant epoch initiating the socio-cultural and scientific achievements of the country. It is otherwise considered as the beginning of the modernity and the end of mediaeval era.

With the foundation of Indian Museum in 1814, the Museum movement started rolling in India and through the years from then, got a new fillip and great momentum. Since then, it has so

magnificently developed and culminated into the fruitful existence of more than 400 museums in the country.

To appreciate the history of the origin and growth of the Indian Museum we are to travel back to the last quarter of the 18th century when Sir William Jones a profound scholar devoted his life to the service of India, founded the Asiatic Society in 1784 in Kolkata.

The role of the Asiatic Society was to form a learning centre for the development of art and culture pertaining to the socio-cultural activities, entertaining people, disseminating knowledge and preserving the cultural as well as natural heritage of mankind for posterity within the geographical limits of Asia.

Sir William Jones, the founder of the Asiatic Society, however, in his inaugural address did not refer to the foundation of a museum as part of the activities of the society.

In 1796 the members of the Asiatic Society conceived an idea of establishing a Museum at a suitable place for the reception and preservation of the objects whatever it is performed by man or produced by nature.

The idea got shape in the beginning of 1808 when society found itself in a position to occupy its premises erected at the corner of Park Street on a land granted by the Government.

Six years later a definite effort was made to give effect to the intention to establish a museum when, Dr Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish botanist, who had been taken prisoner at the siege of Serampur, Hooghly, but was released by the Government in recognition of his scientific attainments, wrote a letter to the society in which he strongly advocated the formation of a Museum and offered a proposal to the society not only to act as honorary curator of the proposed Museum but also to supply duplicates from his own valuable collections.

The proposal found ready acceptance with the members of the society and it was determined to establish Society Museum at the premises of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Thus a museum, under the guidance of Dr Nathaniel Wallich was established on 2 February 1814 at the Asiatic Society. He was appointed as Honorary Curator of the Oriental Museum of the Asiatic Society.

Interesting and curious objects were collected from various parts of the country. A list of gifts consisted of 174 items were donated by 27 European donors in the year 1816. The individual collectors were Col. Stewart, Dr Tytler, General Mackenjie, Mr Bryan Hodgson, Capt. Gillon.

Indian contributors started gifting objects to the Museum. Out of 49 donors of the list six donors were Baboo Ram Comul Sen, Kali Kissen Bahadoor, Moharaja Radhacant Deb, Mathuranath Mullick, Sivachandra Doss, and her Highness Begam Sambroo.

In 1837, James Prinsep, Secretary of the Society wrote to the Government to adopt proposition of the Society for the formation of a National Museum at the cost of the State.

Dr Helfer and other scientific officers decided to found a museum of economic geology in Calcutta; this museum was actually opened in 1840. The museum of economic geology thus constituted continued to occupy the premises of the Society till 1856 when the portion of the collection owned by the Government of India was removed and housed at no. 1 Hasting Street in connection with the Geological Survey of India.

In 1856, the members of the society decided to submit a memorial to the Government of India for the establishment of an Imperial Museum at Calcutta. Two years later a representation was submitted to the Government of India in which the society pressed for the foundation of an Imperial Museum at Calcutta. The Government of India recognized its duty to establish an Imperial Museum in the Metropolis for the collection and exposition of specimens of natural history, physical, economical and historical, etc.

In 1858, The Geological Museum was amalgamated with that of the Geological Survey of India.

In 1862, the Government of India announced the foundation of a Public Museum at Calcutta which might be taken into consideration with the practical realisation.

Negotiations between the Government of India and the Asiatic Society were protracted till the middle on the year 1865 and it was decided that the Society should make over to the Board of Trustees for the proposed Museum for the zoological, geological, and archaeological collections and in this connection Government of India would provide a suitable accommodation for the Society in the Museum building.

Afterwards it was realized that the building as planned could not possibly find accommodation for the Asiatic Society in addition to the Geological Survey of India and the Natural History Museum, the society also expressed its unwillingness to enter a building where accommodation was insufficient and freedom of action was liable to be cramped.

In 1867 the foundation of the present building of the Indian Museum was thus laid on the finest site of Chowringhee in front of small Cause Court. In 1875, the present Museum building on Chowringhee, designed by W. L. Grandville was completed. From 1814 to 1878 the museum was at the Asiatic Society of Park Street, Kolkata. After the completion of the construction of the new building at Chowringhee Road, the Society Museum was shifted from the Asiatic Society to the present building and it was thrown open to the public with two galleries on 1 April 1878. The Archaeology gallery and bird gallery of the Zoological Section had been declared open to public in the present building.

Though in the beginning Indian Museum was opened with two galleries later on it was transformed into a multipurpose Institution where multi-disciplinary objects have been displayed in its six sections, viz. Art, Archaeology, Anthropology, Zoology, Geology, and Botany.

The museum which was known in the beginning as the "Asiatic Society Museum" subsequently came to be known as the "Imperial Museum" later familiarized as the "**Indian Museum**". The museum is more familiar by the name Jadughar or Ajabghar among the visitors.

From the days of the Asiatic Museum, this institution has been rendering its services to the people of India as an epitome of art and culture of India. The role of Indian Museum witnesses the socio-cultural harmony between the Museum and the society.

As a consequence the museum has developed into the largest institution of its kind of the country portraying the legacy and pride of the nation and also being highlighted as one of the pioneering National Institutions in the Constitution of the Republic of India.

The Museum Directorate has three main cultural sections namely, Art, Archaeology, and Anthropology together with eight co-ordinating service units such as Preservation, Publication, Photography, Presentation, Modelling, Education, Library, and Security.

The Museum has its own Medical unit to provide preliminary medical services to all the staffs of the organisation.

2. Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad- Chatrapathishivaji Museum-, Bombay

Salar Jung Museum:

The Salar Jung Museum of Hyderabad is a repository of the artistic achievements of diverse European, Asian and Far Eastern countries of the world. The major portion of this collection was acquired by Nawab Mir Yousuf Ali Khan popularly known as Salar Jung III. The zeal for acquiring art objects continued as a family tradition for three generations of Salar Jungs. In 1914, Salar Jung III, after having relinquished the post of Prime Minister to H.E.H., the Nizam VII, Nawab Mir Osman Ali Khan, devoted rest of his entire life in collecting and enriching the treasures of art and literature till he lived. The precious and rare art objects collected by him for a period of over forty years, find place in the portals of the Salar Jung Museum, as rare to very rare pieces of art.

After the demise of Salar Jung-III, the vast collection of precious art objects and his Library which were housed in "Dewan-Deodi" the ancestral palace of the Salar Jungs, the desirability of organizing a Museum out of the Nawab's collection dawned quite soon and Sri M.K. Velodi, the then Chief Civil Administrator of the Hyderabad State approached Dr. James Cousins a well known art critic, to organize the various objects of art and curios which were lying scattered in different palaces of Salar Jung III to form a Museum.

With a view to perpetuate the name of Salar Jung as a world renowned art connoisseur, the Salar Jung Museum was brought in to existence and was opened to the public by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India on 16th December, 1951.

However, the administration of the Museum continued to be vested in the Salar Jung Estate Committee till 1958. Thereafter, the heirs of Salar Jung Bahadur graciously agreed to donate the entire collection to the Government of India through a Compromise Deed based on a High Court Decree on 26th December 1958. The Museum continued to be administered directly by the Government of India till 1961. Through an Act of Parliament (Act of 26 of 1961) the Salar Jung Museum with its Library was declared to be an Institution of National Importance. The

administration was entrusted to an Autonomous Board of Trustees with the Governor of Andhra Pradesh as its Ex-officio Chairman and ten other members representing the Government of India, the State of Andhra Pradesh, Osmania University and one from the family of Salar Jung.

The Museum has a magnificent global collection of art objects and antiques not only of Indian origin, but mostly from countries Western, a sizable collection hails from Middle Eastern and Far Eastern origins. In 2000 AD, under museum expansion programme two more buildings were added on either side of existing central building.

Basing on the nature of collections, the Western /European collections were displayed in the Western Block and Eastern collections in the Eastern block. Mixed collection including Children's section, Rebecca, Musical clock, Jade, Ivory etc., galleries were located in the central building. A rich reference library which contains reference books, large collection of rare manuscripts etc. is also located the in the central building. Thus, this Museum has become popular, not only as a place of interest but also as an institution for education.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum, Bombay

Founded in the early 1900s, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya is one of the premier cultural institutions in the country. On 14th August 1905, a number of prominent people of Bombay gathered at the Town Hall and resolved to erect a Memorial to the visit of the Prince of Wales (later King George V) in the form of a public Museum which, would be named after him. The meeting was attended by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Justice Badrudin Tyabji, Narotamdas Gokuldas, Justice Chandavarkar, Sassoon J. David and many other dignitaries known for their outstanding contribution in their respective fields and also in the development of the island of Bombay. The Foundation Stone of the Museum was laid by the Prince of Wales on 11th November 1905 and the Museum was named Prince of Wales Museum of Western India. For a long time people had also felt the need for a good museum in the city and finally the museum was established by the public contribution aided by the then Government of the Bombay Presidency.

This memorial in the form of a museum was to be erected on the plot of land known as the Crescent Site on the southern tip of the island. The building was completed in 1914 but it opened to the public much later on 10th January, 1922. Until then it was used by the military as a hospital and for Children's Welfare Exhibitions.

Many things have changed since then. Bombay is now known as Mumbai and the name of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India is changed to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya. Set against a well laid out garden which retains its original plan even today, the museum is an important Heritage building of the city.

3. GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI

The proposal for a museum in Madras was mooted by the Madras Literary Society in 1846 AD and Sir Henry Pottinger, the then Governor, obtained the sanction of the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London.

In January 1851 AD, Dr. Edward Balfour, Medical Officer of the Governor's Body guard was appointed as the First Officer in charge of the Government Museum. The notification in the Fort St. George Gazetteer dated 29th April 1851 AD contained the first announcement regarding the opening of the Madras Government Museum. The Government Museum otherwise called as the Central Museum was started in the College of Fort St. George, in the premises of the present office of the Director of Public Instruction, on College Road. The college had been established in 1812 AD and made a significant contribution to the development of South Indian Languages. The Museum was started in the first floor of the college with the 1100 geological specimens of the Madras Literary Society. It steadily developed and expanded under the guidance and supervision of a succession of directors.

As the building was in a dilapidated condition, the Museum's Superintendent, Dr. Balfour advocated shifting it to another building.

In December 1854 AD, it was shifted to a building named the Pantheon, also known as the Public Rooms or Assembly Rooms, where the elite of the city met.

The building was being utilised for banquets, balls and dramatic performances from the last decade of the 18th Century. The estate of the Pantheon was the property of Hall Plumer, civil servant and public works contractor who subsequently, in 1793 AD, assigned the grounds to a Committee of 24, which regulated the public amusements in the city at that time. In 1821 AD, the Committee sold the main house and central garden space to E.S. Moorat, a wealthy Armenian merchant, who in turn, sold it back to the Government in 1830 AD, for Rs.28,000. The property was originally 43 acres in extent and stretched from Casa Major Road to the present Police Commissioner's Road, and it was flanked by the Pantheon Road and Halls Road.

The Public Library was started in 1853 AD. It was opened to the public in June 1862 AD. The construction of the library and lecture hall began in December 1873 AD and completed in 1875 AD and formally opened by the Governor on March 16, 1876 AD. Captain Mitchell, Superintendent, was responsible for strengthening the library. He is regarded as the originator of the Connemara Public Library.

It was formally opened on December 5, 1896 AD by Sir Arthur Elibank Havelock, the then Governor and named after its progenitor, Lord Connemara, Governor of Madras. Designed by H.Irvin, the then Consulting Architect to the Government of Madras, it had a magnificent hall with a splendid reading room and beautiful teak wood shelves.

The library had an imposing tower 200 feet high, the highest in Madras at that time. But in March 1897 AD, the tower was demolished as it was found to be in a precarious condition.

Libraries controlled by different bodies which were in need of space were invited to occupy some portion of the Connemara Library. The Madras Literary Society Library was the first to function inside the Connemara Library until it was shifted in 1905 AD to its present building on College Road. The Madras University Library occupied the space vacated by the Madras Literary Society Library and functioned there until 1928 AD when it moved to *Chepauk*. The Oriental Manuscripts Library which was also housed in the Connemara Library till 1935 AD, moved into the University Buildings at *Chepauk*. Books were purchased on behalf of the Victoria Technical Institute from the *Dhanakoti Mudaliar* Endowment and still housed in the Fine Arts Section of the Connemara Public Library. Later the library came under the control of the Director of Public Instruction.

In 1854 AD, a young cheetah and tiger were kept in the museum and visitors came to see them from distant places. As visitors to the museum increased, Dr. Balfour requested the Nawab of the Carnatic, to send the wild animals he had to the museum. In September 1855 AD, a notification was issued asking for the animals to be gifted to the Museum Zoological Gardens. By the first half year of 1856 AD, the Madras Museum had zoological garden with 360 animals. In 1863 AD, the City Municipality took over the Zoological Gardens and shifted it to the People's Park.

The plans for the Madras Aquarium were drawn up in 1905-1906 AD by Dr. Thurston, the then Superintendent of the Museum in consultation with a Committee. As this was the first Aquarium, methods of aeration, etc. found useful in Europe had to be suitably modified and adopted. The aquarium was opened to the public on October 21, 1909 AD and was very popular.

When the Fisheries Department came to be organised, the management of the aquarium was taken over by it on April 1, 1910 AD. During 1942 AD, owing to the threat of a Japanese attack on Madras, the city was evacuated, the collections in the Aquarium were thrown and it ceased to exist. Attempts to rebuild the aquarium have not fructified.

The period 1941-1946 AD were bad years for the Museum. A great part of the buildings and the grounds had to be handed over for an ARP depot stationed in the Museum. The galleries had to be used as storage rooms and therefore the showcases were removed. The most valuable among the collections, such as bronzes, copper plate grants, selected coins, relic caskets of *Bhattiprolu*, etc. were sent to places of safety. As the *Amaravati* sculptures were too heavy and difficult to transport, the Government ordered that they should be protected in situ in the Gallery.

In December 1896 AD, the Front Building (Anthropological Galleries) and The Museum Theatre were opened. The new extension (main entrance) was built in 1939 AD in order to display stone sculptures, period-wise. The Government Museum took over the Victoria Technical Institute Building (constructed in 1909 AD) and named it as National Art Gallery and was thrown open to the public on November 27, 1951 AD.

The Museum celebrated its Centenary on November 27, 1951 AD which was inaugurated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In Order to display the exquisite rich collection of bronzes, a separate building was constructed in 1963 AD. In the same year, a new block was added to the Chemical Conservation Section to cope with the increasing work of preservation. A new building for the Birds Gallery was also opened in 1963 AD.

A separate building for Contemporary Art was opened in January 25, 1984 AD and a new Children's Museum building was opened in April 1988 AD. The *Raja Ravi Varma* paintings, which are considered as National Treasures, have been placed in a gallery with **Fibre Optic lighting**. This system of lighting gives a dramatic lighting effect. The Contemporary Art Gallery has been lit using **Dichroic Halogen lamps**. These lamps reflect back the heat. They also have a pleasing visual effect. These lighting methods are technology demonstrators and a first for museums in India at the time of their installation in 2001 AD.

Notable collections in the Museum are the world famous South Indian bronzes, *Amaravati* sculptures, *Tanjore (Thanjavur)* armoury, inscriptions on stones and copper plates, the *Dowleshwaram* hoard of gold coins of *Raja Raja I* and *Kulothunga I*, the *Chengam* hoard of copper coins, artifacts from the Megaliths of *Adichanallur*, the Bruce Foote Collection of prehistoric stone implements, Roman and other artifacts from the famous site of *Arikamedu* (near Pondicherry), the exquisite crystal reliquaries from the *Bhattiprolu Stupa* and the enormous skeleton of the whale obtained on shore near Mangalore.

4. Local Museums: History Department Museum ,Government Arts College, Gass Museum, Forest College

Toward the end of the 19th century, an aborted attempt was made by J. A. Gamble, the conservator of forests for Madras Presidency, to establish a forest museum in the province. A few years later in 1902, Gamble's successor as Conservator of Forests Horace Arichibald Gass succeeded in establishing a museum for forestry. It was opened to the public 15 April 1902 by Baron Amptill, the then Governor of Madras, at that point simply referred to as the Forest Museum at Coimbatore. When Gass, the first curator, retired in 1905, his successor F. A. Lodge renamed the museum in his honor. It was expanded in 1905 and 1915. In 1912, the Madras Forestry College (currently the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy) was established in the museum grounds to train foresters. During 1942-47, the museum was closed and the buildings used as shelters for World War II evacuees from Malta and Greece. After Indian Independence in 1947, the museum came under the administration Government of Tamil Nadu. It is currently run by the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), which is situated in the same campus.^{[1][2]} The museum was reopened for public on May 1, 2015 after carrying out renovation works.^[3] A 3D diorama depicting wildlife in its natural habitat has been added.

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