Growth of Museums in Odisha
During the 21st Century

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After independence, the museums are growing rapidly with the improvement of the education and mass communication. Towards the close of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century a large number of new varieties of museums were established in the eastern part of Odisha. They are Temple Museum, Natural History Museum, Tribal Museum, Insect Museum, Personalia Museum etc. which are small in size but the collections of the museums are very important for the students, research scholars and teachers. The Temple Museum, Konark only preserves the various parts of the Konark temple and development of art and architecture in Odisha. The tribal museum speaks of the tribal culture of the tribal people of Odisha. The science museum preserves the importance of the science and the improvement of our living condition from ancient time to present time. The museums which are founded towards the beginning of the 21st century are given below.

Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhubaneswar:

The present eastern regional centre of National Museum of Natural History established by Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, situated in a prime location in the temple city of Bhubaneswar. Six acres of land was given free of cost by the Government of Odisha for the purpose. Initial phase of construction began after foundation stone was laid on 5th November 1994. Subsequently the museum was opened for the public on 10th August 2004 with the objective of promoting non-formal environmental education among general public and younger generation in particular.

To achieve this objective various galleries depicting biological diversity of the region is beautifully presented in a learning set up supported by aesthetically designed landscape. The vibrant biodiversity of Chilika, Bhitarakanika, Similipal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and North East have been showcased in the galleries portraying natural richness under one roof. It is experienced that knowledge disseminated with the help of realistic museum exhibited inside permanent gallery, temporary exhibition hall, aptly oriented discovery centre, impact exhibits played an important role for the visitors since its inception.

Research driven exhibit showcases comprising skeletal display with poignant story of Shankar. The wild rogue tusker and African black rhinoceros, intricate architectural nest building behaviour of hornet wasp are displayed in a moveable showcase. The story of big and small cats of India, interesting facts of butterflies and valuable collection and display of sixteen rhino, skulls belonging to three different species
of the world encourage responsible visitors to spread the message of creative learning environment. A scientific laboratory consisting of baseline information with the help of simple instruments and chemicals encourage school students to understand and visualize different curriculum based practical activity which is lacking in modern formal learning system inside classrooms. Hopefully this has turned into substitute for online information for the students to prepare their projects with real educational potential of first hand experience. Some interactive exhibits and multi dimensional programmes have resulted in gradual increase in visitors inflow. This is the only centre where one can see and understand the working principle of rain water harvesting system associated with artificial recharge of ground water and solar lighting system.

**Galleries and Exhibits:**

Museum houses have four spectacular galleries, beautiful aquariums and magnificent osteological exhibits of mammals, birds, reptiles and rare herpetological collections.

**Gallery – 1 : Unique Creations of Nature**

Temporary gallery portrays rare, extinct and endangered animals of India like whale, python, stuffed crocodiles, models of black buck, hyena, wild dog and clouded leopard.

**Gallery – 2 : Biodiversity Gallery**

Permanent gallery depicts vast biodiversity of different habitats like Chilika, Bhitarakanika and Similipal Biosphere Reserve besides North Eastern Region, Andaman and Nicobar Islands were showcased to captivate young minds toward better understanding about ecology.

**Gallery – 3 : Discovery Centre**

This gallery is specially designed for children to achieve enjoyable learning involving all senses to inculcate interest about environment. Various scientific facts have been displayed with visual aid and in a manner of questions and answers.

**Gallery – 4 : Second Phase Gallery**

Ongoing gallery development activities focused on natural phenomenon are also given importance for exhibit design and display.

Recently valuable and interesting collection of geological and zoological specimens brought from Madagascar island were donated by Shri Abasar Beuria, former Ambassador of India. The whole collection have given a concept for design and display to educate the visitors about natural treasure of Madagascar. This happens to be the only museum in India where one can see the artist’s expression about extinct elephant, bird with its largest egg of the world. There are interesting fossilized remains of tree, vertebra of dinosaur, ammonites and fish that reveal million years evolutionary history related with their origin and extinction. The fascinating collection of shining spherical agate, calcite, quartz, rocks, has given us to interlink different continent in time and space.

**Konark Museum:**

Konark is a small village in Puri district situated on the sea coast of Odisha. The place is well connected by good motorable roads from Bhubaneswar and Puri. The place is sacred and famous for the Sun temple. It is one of the principal Kshetras mentioned in the Kapila Samhita. It is otherwise called Arka Kshetra or Padma Kshetra. The term Konark is attributed to the world Kona and Arka meaning thereby corner and Sun respectively hence the etymology corner Sun.
The Konark Museum is called the temple museum because all the structure of the temple has been displayed in the museum showing the need of the preservation and conservation of the ancient monuments.

The fallen architectural members and sculptures focused the attention of the scholars and the Government how to preserve and protect the objects not only from Sun and rain but also from human vandalism that led the way for the creation of a museum. This museum is now the product of this thought and action to convey the message of the aesthetic and cultural grandeur of the times by presenting them on scientific display methods in the galleries. The collection of the sculptures, architectural members from the complex got preserved in the complex and then shifted to the present building in 1968.

Presently this museum consists of four galleries and corridor with open verandah where the blow-ups of various monuments of Odisha have been displayed for the benefit of public. The fourth gallery was opened in 2004 only.

The museum greets the visitors with duel bearers and a chart of evolution of Odia Script from the earliest script Brahmi of Asokan period and gradual development till 13th century. The visitors may have to see the plan of the temple and empire of Narasimhadeva I on a blow up before entering to the gallery No.1.

The gallery No. 1 greets with object of a colossal image of sand stone Surya, reconstructed chariot wheel and the sculptures of Varaha, Trivikram and Narasimha of chlorite stone from brick temple of the Sun Temple Complex. In the adjoining hall of gallery 2 a few scenes of reconstructed temple wall along with two large celestial musicians, animal motifs and Dikpala figures are the centre of attraction. Besides Panchadevatas are found on one platform.

The gallery No. III contains two celestial stupendous female figures as if paying homage to Suryanarayana and two fantastic animals, Gajalaxmi panel are remarkable. Further, Narasimhadeva worshipping the triad (Shivalinga, Purusottam Jagannath and Goddess Durga) on one platform is very remarkable and signifies the religious harmony during the 13th century.

The newly organized gallery has been coined as gallery No. IV which contains the figure of the King witnessing dance scene, the Surya image, the marching elephants, the erotic figures and the showcases contain the celestial Kanyas on various postures. The visitors have the scope and opportunity to study our ancient cultural values in depth as well as to be entertained.

The museum serves the purpose of the visitors in every field not only in education but also helps in creating awareness about our ancient culture among the masses. It highlights how to protect and preserve our heritage for future. It educates the youth of the day about the site, environment, cultural ethos as well as the ethical values of the ancient days.

The monument along with other edifices is enlisted in the world cultural heritage by the UNESCO in recognition of its outstanding contribution to humanity in the field of art and architecture not only in the Indian context but also in the international sphere. The museum which is a part and parcel of the Sun temple in which it plays a pivotal role conveying the message of the past glory to the public in the field of education and culture. The museum is further trying to keep the ethos of our culture in tact by way of exhibits, audiovisual shows etc.

**Tribal Museum, Bhubaneswar:**

The idea of setting up a tribal museum in SCSTRTI located CRPF Square, Bhubaneswar was originally conceived in 1987 but materialized
on 5th March 2001. The exhibits of the museum represent the elementary human cultural values that had shaped our past, are determining our present and will be guiding our future. So the tribal museum can be conceptually labelled as “Museum of Man”. In common parlance museum of man means an integrated institution which disseminates knowledge covering the human species in its totality.

The museum has approximately 1900 displayed tribal artifacts in five halls. They exhibit dresses and ornaments, dhokra items, dances and musical instruments, hunting implements, fishing nets, weapons of offence and defence, personal belongings, arts and photographs.

The indigenous tools, technologies, weapons, basketry, pottery, textiles, dresses, ornaments and rural objects are losing their meaning to the new generation. Hence protection and preservation of these tools, appliances and material traits in the museum have become a necessity to know the antecedents of human and living.

Tribals have enriched the complex ethnocultural mosaic of the state. Each individual tribe is unique in terms of its material culture, settlement pattern, house type, mode of subsistence, social organization, traditional decision making institutions, language, dance, music, adornment, food habit, tools and technology, aesthetics, belief system, traditional practice of health and healing etc. They have excellent creative talents, skills and power of imagination in designing art, crafts and artifacts.

The dress and ornament section of the museum has 34 textile items of 8 tribes and ornaments belonging to 17 tribes. The traditional costumes include tropical textile items like “ringa” of Bonda “phute saree” of Santal, gatungkap of Lanjia Saora etc. Bead necklace like tangam of Langia Saora, Shaska of Kutia Kandha, Kunti of Juang, coin necklace like Mecodica of Dong Kondh, paste of Koya, Dabu and Lubeida of Bonda tribes figure in the ornament section.

Dhokra and musical instrument section of the museum has 117 dhokra items of Bathudi, Desia Kondh, Dongria Kondh and Kondh tribes. Among these Dhokra items lionet, paji and snake charmers of Desia Kondh ox head of Bathudi and elephant of Bhuinya tribe are quite spectacular. Besides, 13 musical instruments like horn trumpet of Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Santal, Bonda double membrane, drum of Holva flute and violin of Santal, Changu of Juang attract all categories of visitors including musicians.

The agricultural implements include a variety of hoes of primitive tribal groups, wooden plough of progressive farmers along with 168 tribal household objects such as tumba gourd container of Dongria Kondh, Siali net, Siali oil, extractor and Siali fibre, basket of Mankirdia, wine container of Paroja and wine pot of Lanjia Saora create a vivid picture of the ancient culture of a remote tribal area in the visitor’s mind.

Hunting implements of 22 tribes including the primitive groups, 36 items of fishing nets and crafts of 15 tribes add to the speciality of the museum where axe of Kondh, spear of Paroja, sword of Oram, knife of Dongria Kondh and bows arrows of all the tribes attract researchers and commoners alike. Besides all these, the presence of net traps of Mankirdias, Kutia Kondh, Santal, Kisan, Juang, fish basket of Bonda, fishing traps of Gond enhance the beauty of the museum.

The attraction of the art and photograph section includes snaps like ‘Shaman’ and anital of Saora, Koya dancing girls, women of Bonda and Dongria Kondh with traditional costumes and sketches drawn by tribal children at school.
Saora shrine crafts like Manduasum and Jenanglosum, Dongria Kondh shrine crafts like Kateibali, Meriah Past, Kandru duma displayed on the open air platform inside the museum and Saora shrine crafts like Jodisum gun war rang beneath the trees beyond the museum premises amuse visitors of all hues.

A centrally air conditioned auditorium having sitting arrangement for 112 people annexed to the museum building provides a venue for cultural interface of the ethnic performing arts, dance, musical get together with the visitors.

The tribal museum surrounded by a sprawling campus has steadily grown over past five decades. It has been serving as a spring board for eco-tourism in tribal Odisha. Overseas eco-tourists came to the museum as their first itinerary before fanning out to the back waters of tribal Odisha. Scholars, students and general public are also visiting this institution and their number is increasing over years.

Aquarium Museum, Bhubaneswar:

Aquarium keeping has been age-old practice. The Sumerians, the ancient people of Mesopotamia have been keeping fishes in ponds since at least 4,500 years ago. Other early human cultures that fashioned aquarium keeping include the Egyptians, the Asians, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Romans. These ancient aquarium served several purposes including entertainment, a place to breed fishes for market as also ready source of food. The Chinese developed the practice of breeding ornamental fishes suitable for keeping in small containers. A classic result of their efforts is the gold fish.

The term aquarium first appeared in the works of Phillip Gosse (1810-88) a British scientist. First public aquarium of its kind was opened in 1853 in Regent’s Park London followed by aquarium in Berlin, Naples and Paris. By 1928 there were 45 public or commercial aquariums throughout the world. After World War II growth became slow and few public aquarium were established.

In India, this concept of aquarium and aquarium fish keeping has been practiced since long ago, popularized mainly by the Britishers through inclusion of exotic varieties. Presently it is gaining popularity and almost every household is keen to keep aquarium.

Pearl Museum, Bhubaneswar:

Pearls known as Queen of Gems have been occupying a unique place due to their fascinating beauty ever since their discovery in ancient times. Pearls were considered as an exclusive privilege of royalty and throughout history held within wealthy and powerful. Pearls are viewed as magic charms, symbols of purity and love or sources of wisdom and power. Hindus believe Pearl brings happiness, to Chinese it brings wealth, to Egyptian love and so on. A natural pearl is formed when a foreign particle such as a piece of sand or parasite make its way into particular species of molluss and cannot be expelled. As a defence mechanism, the animal secretes a substance, known as nacre, to coat the foreign body. Layer upon layer of this coating is deposited on the irritant resulting in a shimmering and iridescent creation of a gem. The culture pearl undergoes the same process of formation as that of natural pearl. The only difference is that an irritant otherwise called as nucleus of desired shape and size is surgically implanted into the body of Sivalve Molluse where it cannot be expelled. The animal does the rest creating the precious biological gem, the pearl. Thus the nature’s hand is not completely eliminated, in fact it is the animal that determines the character of the pearl produced. The biomineralisation of pearl thus is
the outcome of the synergy between man, animal and ambient minerals.

Fresh water pearl culture is more advantageous in terms of commercial scale availability of natural stocks of pearl mussels in easily accessible habitats, wider area of framing even in non-maritime regions, operational easiness in management of fresh water culture environment, absence of natural fouling boring and predatory organisms and overall cost effectiveness of the operations. Realizing the potential and the scope of inland pearl culture, the Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture, Kausalyaganga Bhubaneswar has seen involved in research investigation since 1987 and evolved the base technology of growing pearls from freshwater environment using three important freshwater mussel spices viz. Lamillidens Manginalis, Lacorianus and Parreysia Corrugata. Considering the importance and need for greater excellence of the pearl museum the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has awarded to the Institute since 1999 which is a great honour for the museum.

**Insects Museum, Bhubaneswar :**

Insects are invertebrates and belong to the group called arthropods. They are the only arthropods that can fly. Many have a complex life cycle. Wherever they exist, they have a huge ecological impact as herbivores, hunters, decomposers, plant pollinators, and disease carriers. Adult insects have a head, a thorax and an abdomen each composed of segments. They also have six joined legs modified for walking jumping, digging or swimming. All parts are enclosed in an exoskeleton. The Insect Museum Bhubaneswar was established in the year 1954 which possess 4367 numbers of objects. This museum was developed by the financial assistance of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi. The aim of the opening of this museum is to acquaint the under Graduate, Post-Graduate and Ph.D. Scholars about the identification of various species of insects attacking crop plants.

**Jatin Das Centre of Art Museum, Bhubaneswar :**

The Jatin Das Centre of Art Museum was named after the name of Jatin Das, the greatest artist of Odisha. From the princely state of Mayurbhanj in Odisha, Jatin Das went to Bombay to study art, a trip from the east coast to the west. He took a great interest for the need and importance of the traditional art and artefacts. The Jatin Das Centre of Art Museum is popularly called the JD Centre of Art Museum. This museum brings together two initiatives : a long-standing invitation to Jatin from the Government of Odisha to set up a museum on the state’s tribal and folk arts and its desires to honour him as an artist of international standing. Originally the land was offered to Jatin Das to build a studio and museum of his works, but by the time he addressed the project, his collection had become varied and substantial. To house this core collection of art objects not only form Odisha but also from other parts of India and the world, the idea was enlarged to make a holistic art centre where contemporary and traditional art sit together.

Facing 3rd century B.C. caves on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, the state capital, the centre is taking shape on land allotted by the Government of Odisha free of premium. A trust, registered on 26th July 1997 with Board of Trustees has been pursuing programmes from a house allotted by the state until the new centre is built. An office also operates out of Delhi. It has an international Advisory Committee comprising people from diverse walks of the life and professions. B.V. Doshi, the renowned Indian architect has completed a master plan and is designing the complex.
**Sudarshan Sahoo Art and Craft Museum, Bhubaneswar:**

Sudarshan Sahoo was born in the holy city of Puri in 1939, the epicenter of Odishan Arts and Crafts. Living close to the habitat of traditional sculptors, he was attracted to them and at the age of 13 was brought under the tutelage of late Guru Bhubaneswar Mohapatra and Guru Kunia Moharana of Puri. His extraordinary capacity to visualize and create a sculpture brought him into the world of art.

In 1971 he was selected for an assignment to carve the Jataka Tales at the Dhauli peace pagoda on the outskirts of the city of Bhubaneswar by the Japan Buddha Sangha. The successful completion of this assignment eventually resulted in drawing him close to Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy.

In 1977 he set up the Sudarshan Crafts Museum at Puri which became a centre of training and produced the best traditional sculptures in stone, wood and fibre glass. His long cherished dream of Sudarshan Art and Crafts village saw the light of day in 1991. With the coded rules of Guru-Sishya Parampara, he started training for young students in this village. It draws many a connoisseur of art for its unique concept which is situated in the heart of the temple city of Bhubaneswar in an idyllic surrounding.

Sudarshan Sahoo’s contribution to the art of sculpture is enormous. He has created his own style by imbibing different techniques from temple carving from all over the country. Today he stands tall as the master of masters not only in the state of Odisha but also of India.

**Lalitgiri Museum**

Lalitgiri is situated in Cuttack district at a distance of around 100 kms from Bhubaneswar. The Buddhist relics found during excavation at Lalitgiri are proposed to be housed in a museum. The excavated Buddhist site Lalitgiri was notified as centrally protected in the year 1937. The site has been extensively excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India during the year 1985-1992. The remains of massive stupa including a relics casket consisting of four containers made of Khondalite Steatite, Silver and Gold containing corporal remains have been recovered during the excavation besides other important structure and archaeological remains.

In order to set up a site museum at Lalitgiri the site has been inspected and preparation of detailed drawing of the proposed museum building have been initiated by the Bhubaneswar Circle ASI. Former Minister and a senior Congress leader Shaikh Matlub Ali has demanded the state government to construct a museum at the famous Buddhist site of Lalitgiri and keep the holy relic of Buddha at that place where it was recovered.

The museum displays the relic caskets of Gautam Buddha and other archaeological finds excavated from the locality. Excavation work carried out here have brought to surface the ruins of a wonderful brick monastery with beautiful carvings, a temple with bow shaped arches, four monasteries and a huge stupa. The Buddhist treasures unearthed from here also include a large number of gold and silver articles, a stone containers, earthen pot and traces of Kushana dynasty and Brahmi script. A massive image of Buddha found here has pursed lips long ears and wide forehead. All these objects are being exhibited in the Lalitgiri Museum. Beside these, this museum also comprises the collections of colossal Buddha figure, Bodhisatva statues, Tara, Jambhala etc. This museum is very important for the students of archaeology and history. It helps to reconstruct the life history of Gautam Buddha.
Ratnagiri Museum:

Archaeological Museum at Ratnagiri is one of the important site museums of Archaeological Survey of India built on the northern crest of the Ratnagiri hill of Asia hill ranges at Ratnagiri village, District -Jajpur.

Tibetan records refer to the existence of a flourishing monastic settlement at Ratnagiri. Inscriptional evidences have also proved the same. However, excavation conducted at the site between 1958-61 brought to light a large number of sculptures, inscribed slabs, terracotta, seals and sealings, votive stupas and an elaborate Buddhist monastic establishment including Viharas, stupas, shrines etc. Before the establishment of the museum the antiquities were mostly kept at the site, store room and in other places which deserved proper display for mass awareness. Thus the need and idea of establishing a museum highlighting the antiquities, culture and heritage of this part of the country cropped up and Archaeological Survey of India took up initiative in this respect.

The construction work of a building for the museum antiquities was completed in 1990 and after necessary arrangements the museum was open to the public on 15th August 1998. It has 3400 listed antiquities of which 220 are displayed in the galleries.

The museum consists of four galleries with a long stepped corridor displayed with sufficient numbers of antiquities, mainly related to Tantric Buddhism. These are varied in nature and include small votive stupas, sculptures of different medium and dimension in stone, bronze, ivory stone and copper inscriptions, inscribed potsherds, innumerable terracotta, seals and sealings, terracotta figures, variety of other metal objects like chhatras, haloes, ornaments, triangular objects, finials, flowers, decorated bands, small vessels, glass bangles, coins etc.

Amongst the displayed antiquities in gallery no. 1 mention may be made of stone images of Buddha in various poses. Avalokitesvara, Khasarpana, Lokesvara, Manjusri, Tara, one six-armed deity all belonging to 9th to 10th century A.D. Special mention may be made of an image of seated Tara and an image of Manjusri in Dhyana mudra both of which mark the excellence of modeling.

The important displayed antiquities in gallery no. 2 include stone sculpture of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Jambhala, Tara in various poses Vasudhara, Chunda, woman in dancing posture etc. A colossal Buddha head, Buddha in bhumi sparsha mudra seated on Visvapadma are also found in this gallery.

Gallery no. 3 has been organized with stupas, images of Buddha, Bodhisattva, Maitreya and some other Vajrayana deities, images of Durga and Vaishnavi, inscribed stone slabs, stone disc etc. attract the attention of the visitors.

In gallery no. 4 miscellaneous objects have been displayed which include terracotta objects, seals and sealings, ivory objects, inscribed copper plates, potsherds and relic pots, objects of daily use etc. The special attention of this gallery are the bronze images of Manjusri, Yamari etc.

In the stepped corridor we can find few monolithic votive stupas and photo blow ups of excavated sites and remains of Udayagiri, Lalitagiri and Ratnagiri.

In the reserve collection there are a number of antiquities which include stone sculptural pieces, monolithic votive stupas, terracotta, seals and sealings, bronze objects, coins, glass bangles pieces etc. which are found from Ratnagiri.
All these museums which are discussed above are the repositories of the priceless heritage of mankind. They help to reconstruct the history and culture of different periods of Odisha. These museums serve the purpose of creating consciousness and understanding of the heritage in Odisha. The students, teachers and researchers are utilizing the object of these museums for their research work. The chief aim of the opening of the museums of 21st century is for research and knowledge. The museums are growing rapidly in Odisha due to the spread of education, mass communication and means of communication.

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CHILIKA DECLARED AS “DESTINATION FLYWAY”.

Chilika has been declared as “Destination Flyway” by United Nation’s World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) because of its natural treasure and bio-diversity. This has been discussed in High Level Meeting held under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary Shri Gokul Chandra Pati in Secretariat Conference Hall. The issues relating to restoration and management of Chilika Lake and its basin were discussed in the meeting in which Chief Executive of Chilika Development Authority Dr. Ajit Kumar Pattanaik presented the updates and proposed action plans.

Reviewing the present position, Chief Secretary Shri Pati has advised to initiate a detailed scientific study on how to retain ecological balance and develop bio-diversity of Chilika in the perspective of the natural changes and dynamics on its opening mouth to the sea. Discussion in the meeting reveals that at present there are about 4 mouths in Chilika including the old Palur mouth. The other three mouths are Gabakunda inlet, Dhalabali inlet and new Phailin inlet (opened after the cyclone Phailin). There are about 211 bird species, largest Irrawaddy dolphin population, 217 fish species and more than 30 migratory species.

Specific interventions have been taken up by Govt during the last years for understanding the complex ecosystem, modeling of hydro-dynamics to retain the optimum salinity gradient of the lake and adaptive restoration planning through wide consultative processes. Management of the wet-land with micro watershed ecological units and empowerment of local communities through capacity building have also been taken up. Strategic Partnerships have been made with a number of voluntary and community based organisations and a close monitoring system has been put in place. Because of these interventions, there has been 7 fold increase in annual fish and prawn landing. At present the Lake is yielding the fisheries of worth Rs.110 cr. per annum. There has been expansion of sea grass meadows, increase in dolphin population and avian fauna. There has been re-appearance of hilsa and other native fish species. Alternative sources of livelihood for local community have also emerged because of bio-diversity and livelihood interventions of Govt. At present, near about 40 cr per annum is being earned from community based eco-tourism activities. Near about 850 boats are being used for dolphin watching and 400 boats are being used to conduct the tourists for bird watching. The boats of the local fishermen have been engaged in these activities which has reduced the pressure on fishery.

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