Cultural property of a country reflects the process of development of a society and it is a source of inspiration for our future generations. The forms exhibited by cultural property can be varied not only in terms of material but also value or age. All countries of the world possess some form of cultural property which is of immense value to them and in many cases to others also. Therefore, it becomes important to safeguard these items of cultural property from decay and dismemberment.

Cultural property is of two types. One is immovable cultural property and the other one is movable cultural property. In immovable category, we can include various types of monuments, temples, caves, forts etc. The world famous Konark Temple, Puri Temple, Lingaraj Temple Rajarani Temple, Parsurameswar Temple, Mukteswar Temple, Rameswar Temple, Khandagiri, Udayagiri caves, Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri archaeological sites, Chausathi Yogini temple of ilirapur and Ranipur Jharial, Huma leaning temple of Sambalpur, Barabati fort, Sisupalgarh of Bhubaneswar, Asurgarh of Kalahandi, Ganjam fort and Raibania fort of Balasore etc. are included in this category.


Archaeology Gallery of Orissa State Museum is famous for rare sculptures of Buddhist, Jaina, Saiva, Vaisnava and Sakta pantheon. The exhibits spread over three spacious hall. The subject matters cover a long time span of 3000 years representing the flourishing plastic, artistic, sculptural and architectural trends and traditions of Orissa. The fragmentary Ashokan pillar, bell capital, lion, the Buddha, Amoghasiddhi, Jina Tirthankaras, Krishnavishnu, Kaliyadalana and Tantric figures of Chamunda etc. attract the tourist from far and near for their superb workmanship and philosophical symbolism. Infact, archaeology gallery is the
repository of sculptural grandeur of Orissa. Epigraphy and Numismatic Section has copper plate grants, stone inscriptions, number of plaster-cast impressions and estampages of the originals, together with numismatic treasures like punch-marked coins of the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan age, Kusana and Puri-Kusana coins, Gupta gold coins, Sri Nanda, Kalachuris and Yadava coins, Ganga fanams and silver coins of Mughal emperors reflect the histrionic personality of Orissa. Armoury Section depicting variety of ancient weapons like swords, shields, battle axes, guns and cannons speak of ancient Orissan Military traditions and the alloy technique employed in the metallurgy of ancient weaponry. Mining and Geology Gallery housing semi precious stones, iron-ore, chromite, lead, bauxite etc. have been displayed which draws instant attention of discerning tourists. In Natural History Gallery, Birds and mammals of vertebrate and invertebrate specimens are colourfully displayed in two spacious halls. It attracts the instant attention of visitors. The dioramas depicting the Royal Bengal Tiger, the leopards, variety of Bisons, Nilgais, Black Bucks, Pangolin and birds preserved amidst natural habitat give a glimpse of the glittering animal kingdom. In Art and Crafts Section, bewildering variety of Orissan handicrafts of exuberant artistic excellence find place together with bronzes from 8th century A.D.. The four dimensional Anthropology/ethnology Section of Orissa State Museum is visitor’s paradise. The diorama depicting tribal life and culture amidst original environmental milieu and ethos are of special significance. Their musical instruments with real audio presentations are the eye catcher of visitors. The tribal hut assemblage presented in a special gallery with every details of an original tribal household is in fact a rare feast for the searching eyes. Patta Paintings Section with depiction of Ravanapragraha, Tadakabada and Kaliyadalana scenes along with contemporary paintings are connoisseur's delight. Palmleaf Manuscripts comprise twenty seven sections like Veda, Tantra, Darsana, Silpa Sastra, Abhidhana, Ayurveda etc. Palmleaf, bamboo leaf, handmade paper, old paper, manuscripts of ivory, birch bark and kumbhi bark etc. in various shapes like garland, fan, fish, sword, rat and parrot along with different types of stylus, express illustrated manuscripts of coloured and monochrome variety are excellently presented. Manuscripts of Gitagovinda, Usha Harana, Ushavilasa and Chausathirati bandha (erotic) and different style of cover designs of palmleaf manuscripts are of special tourist attraction. The same type of objects are also available in Ratnagiri Museum, Konark Museum and different 24 numbers of Branch Museums of the State.

The objects, housed in a museum (the museum objects) are again classified according to their subject or period and also material wise. From the point of view of conservation the classification of these objects based on materials is probably the most suitable one as the vulnerability of different materials to various factors of decay is different and may require different approaches for their control. All these decaying factor can have their own particular effects on the object but in reality most of the time more than one factor is always active and hence the result is synergistic in nature. However, to understand the effect properly, it is more convenient to consider these factors individually. All types of movable cultural property whether it is a sculpture made of metal, stone, or wood, a painting executed on canvass, wood, paper, textile or wall, a piece of textile or a manuscript illustrated or otherwise can be classified into two groups based on their genesis namely.

1. Organic
2. Inorganic
Organic Cultural Property

Textiles, manuscripts, leather objects, parchment, bone, wood, oil paintings, miniature paintings, paintings on textile and wood, photographs are some of the examples of organic cultural property. These objects are termed as organic because the materials used for their creation are obtained from living things—either plants or animals.

The actual number of different types of objects present in a museum may vary depending upon the nature of the museum. For example, an archaeological museum may have a very small number of organic artifacts, as chances of their survival in a burial are quite less whereas in an archives major collection may consist of manuscripts on paper—an organic material.

Inorganic Cultural Property

Metal sculpture and implements, stone sculptures and monuments, ceramic objects and glass are considered inorganic in nature as these are produced from the raw materials obtained from the earth.

Composite Cultural Property

A variety of cultural property consists of both organics and inorganic materials and as such these objects are classified as composite cultural property. An example of this type of cultural property is paintings executed on wall where the ground on which the wall paintings are executed is inorganic in nature and the adhesive used for fixing paint layer is organic in nature.

Besides the above commonly used classification, many times the cultural property is simply classified as outdoor and indoor depending upon whether these are located outside in an open area or these are housed in a building where it is much easier to control the surrounding environment. Outdoor cultural property includes all the monuments, sculptures present in open air as well as in excavation sites.

Factors of Decay

In whatever way we classify a museum object, the fact remains that the objects of organic origin are much more vulnerable to forces of decay and deteriorate at a much faster rate as compared to those made up of inorganic materials like stone, metal and glass. The classification in three distinct classes as inorganic, organic and composite is convenient for visualizing the different types of decay that are possible in these objects.

The process of decay of museum objects is quite complicated and depends upon several factors, which could be classified as Natural factors and man-made factors. Some of the most important factors are listed below:

1. Humidity - For all museum objects the ideal relative humidity should be from 45% to 55%.
2. Temperature - For organic objects temperature should be 25°C.
3. Light (both visible and invisible particularly UV) - Ideal U.V. radiation for organic material is 75% MW/Lumen.
4. Biological agencies - Bacteria, Fungi, Algae, Lichens, Mosses and Liverworts, Plants, Animals, Insects etc. are the agencies for bio-deterioration of the cultural properties.
5. Air Pollution - Any change in the natural composition of atmosphere, soil and water is called pollution. Pollutants may therefore be very different, but they are always deteriorating factor of cultural properties through dust and dirt.
6. Wind and rain - These are the natural factors for decaying the cultural properties.
7. Incidental Factors - Natural calamity like flood, earthquake, fire etc. may harm these
properties and hence disaster-preparedness is necessary in museum also.

8. Negligence and Vandalism - Human vandalism is the most important factor in this regard. Improper storage, display and transportation may cause damage to cultural objects.

All these factors can have their own particular effects on the object but in reality most of the time more than one factor is always active and hence the result is composite in nature. However, to understand the effect properly, it is more convenient to consider these factors individually. So, one of the major responsibilities of all those who are in-charge of cultural heritage of any kind viz. archaeological site, monument, archives, library or a museum is to look after their preservation and safeguard it for future generations. This is only possible if we are aware of the nature of our possession and the factors, which can cause damage to them. The decay process depends upon the nature of the object and its surroundings. In order to arrest the process of decay or to reduce its rate of decay, it is necessary to understand both the nature of the object and its surroundings and environment.

References:

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