



Odisha State Museum - A Tourist Destination

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Museums form an important aid to our country's cultural regeneration. They make it accessible to large sections of people. Museums collect and care for objects of scientific, artistic or historical importance and make them available for public viewing and education through exhibition and allied activities. Museums preserve the cultural heritage of a country. According to International Council of Museums (ICOM), a Museum is a non-profit making permanent institution in the services of the society and its development and open to the public for the purpose of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man, both tangible and intangible and its development. Museums Association of India defines it as "Museum enables people to explore and collection for inspiration, planning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artifacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.

The definition of Museum as adopted in the 5th UNESCO Regional Seminar also explains the meaning and works of a Museum as follows:

"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 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 collection, laboratories and exhibits, the Museum functions under a wide and general programme of education, artistic and recreational activities. The Museum serves on a local, regional or national level in actual and potential, transient or localized, segment of the public and constitutes centripetal cultural force for the better integration of the community.

Let us discuss in view of the above objectives, the role of Odisha State Museum for the spread of Odishan culture and as a centre of education.

Odisha has always been the cradle and playground of history and cultural cross-currents. The rare and lustrous antiquities of Museum reflect archaeological grandeur and past splendor of ancient Kalinga. Its collection comprises cultural treasures of unparalleled magnitude and dimension.

Here noble endeavour has been made to preserve the 'Ancient' for the understanding and appreciation of the 'Modern'. The Museum stands majestically at the junction of ancient temple town of Bhubaneswar and new capital city of Odisha reminding us of our rich cultural heritage of splendor galore.



In 1932 this organisation originated in the premises of Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. It was renamed State Museum and was shifted to Brahmananda building in old Bhubaneswar in 1945-46. From there it came to Patel Hall in 1950 and then to the building near High School of Unit-I. On December 27th, 1957 Dr. Rajendra Prasad, 1st President of India laid the foundation of the present Museum building under the leadership of Dr. H. K. Mahatab. In 1960, the great Institution was finally shifted to the present building. Initially it was part of education department. In 1958 it was handed over to the Cultural Affairs Department.

The Odisha State Museum is situated at the junction of old temple city and new capital metropolis of Bhubaneswar amidst the ruins of an ancient fortification. It is the epitome of Odishan civilisation. It has preserved more than 56,000 rare antiquities ranging from early time to modern period. The collections spread over eleven sections namely-1. *Archaeology*, 2. *Epigraphy*, 3. *Numismatics*, 4. *Armoury*, 5. *Mining & Geology*, 6. *Natural History*, 7. *Art & Craft*, 8. *Contemporary Art*, 9. *Patta Painting*, 10. *Anthropology* and 11. *Palmleaf Manuscripts* which make the onlookers exhilarant and spellbound. The sprawling green garden, open air sculpture garden, children park and enchanting fountains etc. are its added attractions.

Archaeology Gallery

Archaeology Gallery is famous for rare sculptures of Buddhist, Jaina, Saiva, Vaisnava and Sakta pantheons. The exhibits spread over three spacious halls, in the ground floor. The subject matters cover a long time span of 3000 years representing the flourishing plastic, artistic, sculptural and architectural trends and traditions of Odisha. The fragmentary Asokan pillar, bell capital, lion, the Buddha, Amoghasiddhi, Jaina Tirthankaras,

Krishnavishnu, Kaliyadalana, Tantric figures of Chamunda, Manasa and sixheaded Kartikeya images etc. attract the tourist from far near for their superb workmanship and philosophical symbolism. Infact, archaeology gallery is the repository of sculptural grandeur of Odisha. Two ancient stepped wells of the museum complex are fabulous and thrilling sights.

Epigraphy & Numismatic

In Epigraphy and Numismatic Section, Copper plate grants, stone inscriptions, a number of plastercast impressions and estampages of the originals, together with numismatic treasures like punch-marked coins of the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan age, Kusana and Pre-Kusana coins, Gupta gold coins, Sri Nanda, Kalachuri and Yadava coins, Ganga fanams and silver coins of Mughal emperors reflect the histrionic historical personality of Odisha .

Armoury

Armoury section depicting variety of ancient weapons like swords, shields, battle axes, guns and cannons speaks of ancient Odishan Military traditions and the alloy technique employed in the metallurgy of ancient weaponry. Paintings of war scenes and model of entrance of a historic fort instantly attract the visitors.

Mining & Geology

In Mining and Geology Gallery, semi precious stones, Khondolites and sand stones of which temples and sculptures are built, minerals like iron-ore, chromite, lead and bauxite etc. have been displayed. Here a fossilised leaf impression draws the attention of discerning tourists.

Natural History

In Natural History Gallery birds and mammals of vertebrate and invertebrate



specimens have been 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 of Odisha.

Art and Craft

In Art and Craft Section bewildering variety of Odishan handicrafts of exuberant artistic excellence find place together with bronzes from 8th century A.D. The royal insignia and sceptre of princely states of the gallery are effluent exhibits. The bell metal, docra art works and other folk art items of the gallery are unique.

Anthropology

The four dimensional Anthropology/ethnology Section of Odisha State Museum is visitor's paradise. The showcases 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 tourists. The tribal cottage assemblage presented in a special gallery with every details of an original tribal household is in fact a rare feast for the searching eyes. Their attires and ornaments are other highlights of the gallery.

Patta Painting & Contemporary Art

The Patta Painting Gallery with depiction of Ravananugraha, Tadakabadha, Navagunjara, Buddha Charita, Jagannath triad, Kandarpahasti, Gopalila and Kaliyadalana scenes along with contemporary paintings and sculptures are connoisseur's delight.

Manuscripts

Palmleaf manuscripts comprise twenty seven sections like Veda, Tantra, Darsana,

Silpa Sastra, Abhidhana and Ayurveda etc.. Palmleaf, bamboo leaf, handmade paper, old paper, manuscripts of ivory, bhurja bark and kumbhi bark etc. in various shapes like garland, fan, fish, sword, rat and parrot alongwith different types of stylus, express illustrated manuscripts of coloured and monochrome variety are excellently presented. Manuscripts of Gitagovinda, Usha Harana, Ushavilasa and Chausathiratibandha (64 erotic postures) and different style of cover designs of palmleaf manuscripts are of special tourist interest.

Important publications filled the gaps of Odishan History and Culture. Research activities knew no bound. Scholars from far and wide came and the museum reached its pinnacle of prominence and celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1985 with Smt. Indira Gandhi as the Chief Guest. The occasion was marked with a Golden Jubilee publication of Odisha Historical Research Journal and another profound book on "Veer Surendra Sai", the indomitable freedom fighter of India. The Museum has earned its name and fame as a premier international institution of rich collection of various and varied rare antiquities ranging in date from 6th century B. C. to modern period.

In December 2007 Odisha State Museum celebrated its Platinum Jubilee with Hon'ble Chief Minister as the Chief Guest. Two new manuscript galleries were inaugurated, one Platinum Jubilee Volume of Odisha Historical Research Journal, one Illustrated Catalogue of Palmleaf manuscript and one Illustrated palmleaf Gitagovinda Book were released on the occasion. The Museum garden complex was also beautified. A national seminar on Museums of the present decade and Universal Heritage and Konark was organized in association with International Councils of Museum Association of India. Branch Museums, under the Odisha State Museum namely Salipur, Khiching, Bhawanipatna, Baripada and many more district Museums have



been renovated with a new look are important tourist destinations.

In addition to this, two ancient stepped wells, entrance hall, lion diorama showcase, ground floor of Golden Jubilee Block of Odisha State Museum have been renovated which attracts a large number of visitors including students. Numbers of educational programmes are being organized throughout the year to commemorate different occasions. Debate, essay, painting competitions related to cultural and natural heritage are organized among the school and college students on the occasion of Museum Foundation Day (29th December), International Museum Day (18th May) where large numbers of students from different educational institutions of Bhubaneswar and nearby places participate along with their parents and teachers. Such types of programmes have received tremendous response from the general public. Special exhibitions in collaborations with Anthropological Survey of India, Archaeological Survey of India, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, National Museum, New Delhi etc. on the themes like human genome, cultural and natural heritage, tribal ethnography, etc. are organized on different occasions which attract large number of visitors to the Odisha State Museum. Dignitaries like Country Head, Ambassadors, V.V.I.Ps, make it a point to visit Odisha State Museum whenever they come to Bhubaneswar. School and college students, trainees from National Museum Institute, New Delhi, Institute of Archaeology, ASI and other institutions from different parts of the country come to Odisha State Museum as a part of their curriculum and training programmes.

It is pertinent to mention here that besides display of antiquities and sculptures, the Odisha State Museum undertakes several cultural and archaeological projects for documentation and retrieval of cultural heritage. The Odisha State Museum is actively involved in documentation and digitization of manuscripts under the aegis of

National Mission on Manuscripts, New Delhi. The Odisha State Museum has the largest collection of manuscripts in South East Asia. Odisha State Museum has been declared as a Documentation Resource Centre by the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi for the documentation of antiquities of the Museum. In this process Odisha State Museum is actively involved in this project for the successful preparation of data base in the prescribed proforma. It will promote awareness and sensitize people concerning the benefits of preserving our antiquities and also help a lot for publication and research. In the State Museum we have more than 30000 Nos. of antiquities like coins, sculptures, prehistoric tools, Armoury, Bronzes, Copper Plates etc. are available both in the galleries and reserved collections. Prior to this project, the antiquities of the State Museum were not scientifically documented inviting lot of confusion, insecurity and legal hassles. Some of the case studies of the Documentation Project are as follows:

To attract more visitors and tourists, new projects are in progress like renovation of galleries in modern line of technology, academic activities and cultural activities in the Odisha State Museum to boost cultural tourism in the State. To attract domestic and foreign tourists to the Museum is an inevitable task which ought to be included in the plans and programmes of the Museum. Thus, Odisha State Museum is centre of Odishan Culture and a place of learning and academic institution and important tourist destination in the Country.

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