



LITTLE KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS IN CENTRAL INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Archaeological museums are very important category of the museum, because it preserves our year old ancient heritage. Now a day's enhancement is given upon on the Archaeological museums, for preservation and restoration of culture history for our future generation. Archaeological museum preserves and displays our ancient civilization, their culture, society etc. Central India plays an important role in our history from the past. The states provide cultural continuity from prehistoric period to late medieval period.

The present paper illustrates the museums of central India; while special emphasize given upon the museums which are little known to the public and their role to preserve the ancient culture for our future generations.

Key words: Archaeology, Museum, Central India, Gallery.

Introduction to Archaeological Museum

In India, the concept of the museum may be traced back to the historic times where we get the mentions of picture gallery (Chitrasala). In 1796 The Asiatic Society of Bengal felt the need to house the collection (of Archaeological, Ethnological, Zoological, Geological quest). In 1814, the first museum was started known as Indian Museum, Calcutta under the curatorship of Dr. Nathaniel Wallich.¹ During the period of Lord Curzon the museum movement embarked a new phase of development towards the preservation of archaeological monuments. Under the leadership of Sir John Marshall, an eminent archaeologist and Director General of Archaeological survey of India a number

¹ Chakrabarti, Mahua " Museums of India" National Book Trust(2016),New Delhi, P.13



of museums were established at different places of India like Khajuraho, Gwalior, Jodhpur, Ajmer, Saranath, Nalanda, Nagarjunakonda etc.

Archaeological Museums in Central India

The Central India occupies an important niche in the history and culture of India. The states provides cultural continuity from prehistoric period upto late medieval period. The prehistoric period is substantiated by findings of lower, middle, upper Paleolithic and Neolithic tools in the length and breadth of the state. A number of megalithic remains have come to limelight through archaeological explorations and excavations which may be associated with Iron Age culture. Rock paintings sites have come to limelight from Bhimbetka, Pachmarhi, Bastar, Sarguja, Raigarh area, which are interesting so far as the rock art is concerned. The early history of the state traditionally goes back to epic period. From Mauryan period and onwards, we have remains of material culture as gleaned from Explorations and Excavations. The Mauryan, Sunga, Saka-kushana, Satavahana, Chandela, Kalachuris rule in various parts of the Central India is corroborated by the findings of punch marked coin Saka-kushana, Satavahana coins and associate material culture revealed from various early historical sites. The Gupta phase is marked by discovery of Gupta coins, a few epigraphs and material culture recovered from the state. In the post-Gupta period a number of dynasties such as the Nalas, Sarabhapurias, the Panduvanshis, the early Somavanshis, the Nagas, the Telegu-Choda, the Kakatias, the kalachuries and others ruled in different parts of the state enriching the cultural heritage. The political history of these dynasties are very much helpful in understanding the history and culture of central India and adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Andhra etc. The historical period witnessed the growth of Brahmanical religion such as Saivism, Vaishnavism, Saktism, Saurya cult, Ganapati cult etc. along with Jainism and Buddhism as attested from literary and archaeological evidences. The evolution of temple architecture in upper Mahanadi valley, Bastar and Sarguja area provides interesting subject of investigation. The Pre-Kalachuries and Kalachuri sculptural art and iconography throws light on various form of art and influences from neighbouring cultures. In fine the history and culture of Central India from pre historic period upto 15th century is an important chapter in the history of India. Besides this, the 2nd largest number of Scheduled tribes is in the States of Madhya Pradesh. Each of these tribes has its own identity and culture, which varies from each other.

The archaeological remains, cultural objects inspire the people to knee interest towards the museum movement. The oldest museum of the central India is Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur. Some important and little known archaeological museums of central india is discussed below.

State Museum, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

The museum is established in the year 1909 with a rich collection of art works, costumes and other materials of the Bhopal Nawabs. The State Museum of Madhya Pradesh was shifted to its new building on November 2, 2005.² The present building is situated on Shyamla Hills, Bhopal. It houses the best of art and culture of the central India. The museum has 16 different galleries categorized theme wise like – Fossils and Prehistoric, Excavation, Sculpture, Bronze Gallery, Numismatics, Inscription, Miniature Painting, Bagh Painting Gallery, Weapons, Manuscripts, Royal Art Gallery, Textile, Archives, Freedom Struggle Gallery, Stamps and Autographs. The museum is the flashback to the history of Madhya Pradesh.

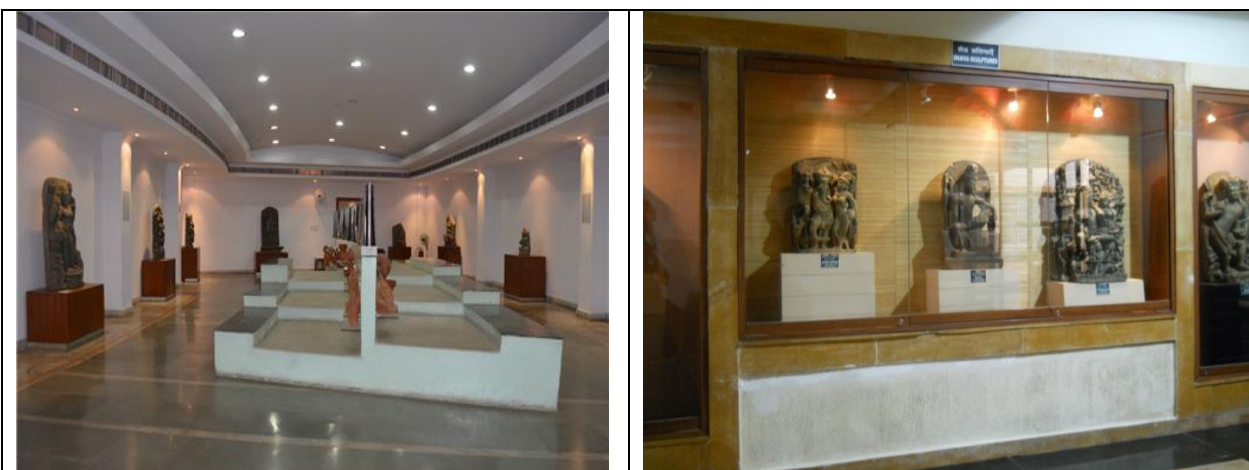


Photo Taken by the Author during his visit to state museum, Bhopal

Maharaja Chhatrasala Museum, Dhubela, Madhya Pradesh

The museum is located in an old palace at Dhubela situated 16 kilometers off district headquarter Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh. The museum is established in the year 1955 in a palace built by Maharaja Chhatrasala. There are eight galleries in the museum. The museum houses a wide

² Guide Book- State Museum, Bhopal (2008), Directorate of Archaeology, Archives & Museums, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

range of Sculptures, Paintings, Garments, Weapons, Inscriptions, Wonder Mirrors, Copper Implements and other objects.³

Fossil national park, Ghughua, Madhya Pradesh

The Ghughua Fossil National Park in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh is a unique destination, where 65 million years old plant fossils are found. In the year 1983 the Government of Madhya Pradesh notified this area as the Ghughua Fossil National Park, which is spread over an area of 27.34 ha.⁴



Photo Taken by the Author during his visit to Fossil National Park, Ghughua.

Birla Museum, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

The museum is established in the year 1971 at Vallabh Bhawan, Bhopal.⁵ The museum houses various images of archaeological importance like stone sculptures prehistoric elements of Paleolithic to Neolithic ages, terracotta, coins, manuscripts, paintings etc.

Sanchi Archaeological Museum, Madhya Pradesh

In the year 1919, Sir John Marshall former director general of ASI established a small museum on the top of the hill. But due to lack of space the museum is shifted to new building in the year 1966. The museum showcases the objects found from Sanchi, Gulgaon, Vidisha, Murelkhud and Gyaraspur. The Ashokan lion Capital with four lion seated back to back exhibited at entrance. The

³ Singh, Arvind. K., Jaina Image Inscriptions of Dhubela museum, Kosala, Vol.5, Year-5, Directorate of Culture and Archaeology, Govt. of Chhatisgarh, Raipur, 2012, p.219.

⁴ Desai kiran, Fossil National Park Ghughua, Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, 2007, P.2.

⁵ Museums of Bhopal, Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, 2004, P.9.



objects displayed in the four galleries are the representatives of six cultural periods i.e., Maurya, Sunga, Satvahana, Kushana, Gupta and post Gupta period.⁶

Vikram Kirti Mandir, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh

Vikram Kirti Mandir was established in the year 1965 in the campus of Vikram University, Ujjain.⁷ The museum houses with coins, sculptures, manuscripts, cloths, weapons, and utensils. The museum displays chalcolithic pottery collected from over 100 sites, animal fossils from Narmada Valley with a huge skull of a primitive elephant.

Archaeological museum, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh

In 1910 Mr. W A Jardine the then local officer of British government in Bundelkhand collected the loose sculptures and architectural remains and preserve near the Matangeshwar temple.⁸ Until 1952 the museum is known as Jardine museum after that it was renamed as Archaeological museum. The present museum was established in 1967. The most important sculptures of this museum represent Brahmanical, Jaina and Buddhist faiths and are displayed in the five galleries inclusive of the main hall.

Archaeological museum, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh

The museum is established in the year 1984 and is located in front of Hathi pole gate of Gwalior fort. The museum is showcased with a large and varied collection of antiquities. The antiquities were collected from Gwalior and its adjacent areas like Amrol, Naresar, Bateswar, Padawali, Sihonia, Kherat, Terahi. The sculptures belong from 1st century BC to 17th century AD.⁹

District Archaeological museum, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh

The museum of Vidisha was established in 1964 with the collection of ancient sculptures, terracotta, coins, plaster casts and earthen seals etc.¹⁰ The most important collection of this museum

⁶ Ibid: P.5.

⁷ Agrawal Usha, Directory of Museums in India, Sundeep Prakashan, New delhi, 2009, p.196.

⁸ http://asi.nic.in/asi_museums_khajuraho.asp

⁹ http://asi.nic.in/asi_museums_gwalior.asp

¹⁰ Agrawal Usha, Directory of Museums in India, Sundeep Prakashan, New delhi, 2009, p.196.



are the images of Yaksha and Yakshi of first century BC, surya, chamunda figures, bhairavnath, panel of Trithankaras etc.

District Archaeological museum, Morena, Madhya Pradesh

The museum has a good collection of Sculpture collected from Sihoniya, Dubkund, Bateshwer, Parhawali, Bhensora, Chitara and Sultangarh. The sculptures were displayed in different section as Shiv Gallery, Jain Gallery, Shakti Gallery, Vividhi Gallery, Photo and Picture Gallery.¹¹

Rani Damayanti Puratattva Sangrahalaya, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh

The museum was established in the year 1989 with the collection of sculptures, inscriptions etc.¹²

District Archaeological museum, Rewa, Madhya Pradesh

This museum is situated at Vyankar bhawan, Kothi compound, Rewa and established in 1989. The museum houses stone objects, terracotta, gold silver metal sculpture, copper coins, paintings, stuffed animals, wooden furniture.¹³

Central museum, Indore, Madhya Pradesh

The museum was established in the year 1929.¹⁴ It is located near the general post office, Indore. The museum has a wide variety of archaeological collection like sculpture, inscriptions, coins, ornaments etc. There are two galleries. The first gallery displays artifacts from prehistoric period which include sculptures, stone tools, quartz, sickles, ornaments etc. All the Hindu mythological carvings have been displayed in second gallery.

Rani Durgawati museum, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh

Rani Durgawati museum is located at Bhaawartal in Jabalpur and established in 1976.¹⁵ The museum houses 10th century sculptures, coins, inscriptions, copper plates etc. The museum displayed letters and photographs related to Mahatma Gandhi.

¹¹ <http://morena.nic.in/museum.html>

¹² <http://damoh.nic.in/archaeology-state.html>

¹³ Agrawal Usha, Directory of Museums in India, Sundeep Prakashan, New delhi, 2009, p.191-192.

¹⁴ Ibid: p.187.

¹⁵ Ibid: p.190.



Tulsi Archaeological museum, Satna, Madhya Pradesh

The museum is located at Ramvan in Stana district of Madhya Pradesh and was established in the year 1959. In 1978, the museum was undertaken by the Government of Madhya Pradesh. The museum houses rear copper and gold coins, stone elements, terracotta, copper plates, gold silver metal sculptures, Birch bark, palm leaf and paper manuscripts. The museum has nine galleries with a collection of 2368 no's of archaeological objects.¹⁶

Harisingh Gour Archaeological Museum, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh

The museum is established in the year 1958 under the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology of Harisingh Gour University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh.¹⁷ The museum is housed with Sculptures, artifacts, Prehistoric Objects, terracotta, pottery, metal objects, inscriptions, beads, coins, seals, sealings and paintings collected from the various sites of Madhya Pradesh and Chhatishgarh.

District Museum, Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh

The shivpuri District Museum was established in the year 1962.¹⁸ The museum has a wide collection of coins, Mughal paintings, sculptures etc.

Archaeological museum, Chanderi, Madhya Pradesh

The museum is opened for the public in 1999. The objects were collected from the ruined temple of budhi chanderi and adjacent areas dating back to 10th and 11th century.¹⁹

Archaeological Museum, Mandu, Madhya Pradesh

This museum is housed with 11th century Hindu sculptures, gigantic statue of Jaina Tirthankar and Islamic calligraphy.

¹⁶ <http://www.archaeology.mp.gov.in/tulsimuseumramvansatna.aspx>

¹⁷ Bajpai, S.K. & Renner, Z., The sculptural Collection of the Harisingh Gour Archaeological Museum of Sagar University, Kosala, Vol.5, Year-5, Directorate of Culture and Archaeology, Govt. of Chhatisgarh, Raipur, p.20.

¹⁸ Agrawal Usha, Directory of Museums in India, Sundeep Prakashan, New delhi, 2009, p.194.

¹⁹ http://asi.nic.in/asi_museums_chanderi.asp



Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum is located in Raipur, Chhattisgarh.²⁰ The museum was established by the famous Raja Mahant Ghasidas of Rajnandgaon in the year 1875. The collection of exhibits are displayed in five galleries. In the archaeological gallery section, we can see the articles and artifacts that were used during the Stone Age. In the sculpture gallery section, stone carved idols of Gods and Goddesses were displayed. The museum includes The Natural History Gallery, The Anthropology Gallery, The Tribal Gallery and Ancient Arms and Armoury Gallery. The museum is housed with sculptures, inscriptions, coins, excavated objects like- potteries, household objects etc.

District Archaeological Museum, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

The museum is established in the year 1981 near the town hall and opened for public in 1983. The museum has a good number of Archaeological objects.²¹

District Archaeological Museum, Bastar, Chhattisgarh

The district archaeological museum, Bastar was established in the year 1988. The museum is displayed the archaeological objects related to Vaishnava, Shaiba and Sakta.²² The museum has also good collections of Sculptures, Inscriptions and coins.

Pachrahi Museum, Kabirdham, Chhattisgarh

This museum is situated near the excavated site Pachrahi. The excavated objects like- coins, sculptures, inscriptions, terracotta, fossils, iron tools and material culture objects etc. were displayed in four galleries as Pre- historic, Numismatics, sculptures and miscellaneous gallery.²³

Role of Archaeological Museums in Contemporary society

Museums play an inevitable role in the preservation of Archaeological objects and monuments. The materials should be preserved for future generations as well as for present generation, which should be helping them to use the material and the knowledge within it for

²⁰ Agrawal Usha, Directory of Museums in India, Sundeep Prakashan, New delhi, 2009, p.64.

²¹ <http://www.cgculture.in/MUSEUM/Bilaspur.htm>

²² <http://www.cgculture.in/MUSEUM/Jagdalpur.htm>

²³ <http://www.cgculture.in/MUSEUM/Pacrahi.html>



educational purpose and enjoyment. Museums play a role to preserve and store the archaeological material in a proper way and save it from mishandling. Many Archaeological museums concentrate on a single period. Site museums are the most specific kinds, due to the objects collected from a particular site/monument.

Data Collection

For the present study, data's were collected from both primary sources during my study visit and secondary sources from books, Journals, reports and website.

Conclusion:

Museums are not mere storehouse; it preserves objects of social, cultural, religious and scientific importance. Museums go through a tremendous developmental change with time, it play an important role in supporting the development of communities. It mirrors events in society with the change of urbanization and modernization. Museum is the organization which encourages, promote and foster the progressive changes in the society. It possesses information that enriches and improves our society in various ways. In this paper the author tries to summarize the various archaeological museums in central India, their collection and importance.
