

THE ROLE OF THE MUSEUM IN SPREADING KNOWLEDGE TO MANKIND

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Abstract

Museum imparts knowledge to the present and future generations about a nation's natural and cultural heritages by preserving objects of the past and present times in-tact. The museum exhibits to collect objects, preserve and conserve the collection intact and thus remains indispensable instrument of education. Formerly, teaching in schools, college and other educational institutes was done by reading from books. However, in this advanced scientific age, students are taught with practical demonstration by using visual aids. The paper focus on the role of museum in spreading knowledge to the mankind.

Key words: *museum, knowledge, mankind, Manipur*

The term Museum is derived from Greek word 'Muse'. Its meaning is the storehouse of knowledge. Briefly speaking, the museum imparts knowledge to the present and future generations about a nation's natural and cultural heritages by preserving objects of the past and present times in-tact. In the past, the role of the museum was to collect objects, preserve and conserve the collection intact and then exhibit to the public the choice objects selected from preserved collection. But in the 20th and the 21st centuries, museum has become an indispensable instrument of education. Formerly, teaching in schools, college and other educational institutes was done by reading from books. However, in this advanced scientific age, students are taught with practical demonstration by using visual aids.

Teaching of the students in the museum has become a fashion, not only in advanced countries like U.S.A., Britain and France, but also in India. According to the famous museum educator, Molly Harrison, teaching the pupils along with objects of the museum will help them understand and know the objects easily. For example, let's take up the lesson on the Indus Valley Civilisation. In the museum, terracottas, beads and images are displayed. Therefore, students can easily learn them without using any text-book. If the students are taught by reading out from books without any display of the objects, students will find it difficult to know them. Knowledge from books and visual knowledge are much different. Knowledge earned from visual display may last a long time whereas bookish knowledge may be forgotten after some time. There is no other place except the museum where objects can be seen in-tact in their original form, shape and condition. Due to differences in subjects, there are museums in different subjects which play a great role in educating students and viewers or visitors. To mention an instance, the National Museum of Natural History, Delhi, clearly displays the origin of the flora and fauna. In the National Doll Museum, the respective cultures of different regions of the world are demonstrated by displaying dolls. The Planetarium displays the Sun, the moon, the Stars, the planets and their satellites and demonstrates their movements. In the Rail Transport Museum are displayed detailed descriptions of the trains since the invention of the train up to the present day. The Aquarium displays different types of living fish. The Birbal Sahani Institute of Palaeobotany displays in detail the shapes and forms of the plants since

their originations up to the present. The said Institute also gives a detailed display about the calciferous plants. Besides, Folk Art Museum, Ethnology Museum, Children Museum, Medical Museum, War Museum etc., play equal parts. By establishing one State Museum in every State of India and opening a section for every subject in each State Museum, knowledge and information is imparted to each visitor. To give an instance, in our Manipur State Museum, a diorama of a Maring tribesman making a basket is displayed in the Ethnological gallery. The knowledge gained from this diorama is that the Marings are adapt in making baskets. Hence the proverb, "Doesn't the Maringtribeman weave the basket by interlacing the strips in pairs?"

Knowledge given by a museum to every visitor may be, more or less, of two types. Firstly, every object displayed in the Gallery has a meaning of its own. Secondly, it is the outward knowledge. To inform each and every visitor to the museum about the objects displayed in the gallery, it is essential to keep a Guide Lecturer who can say why they are kept there, how old they are and from where they are acquired, etc. etc. This will help all persons, young or old, literate or illiterate, students or research scholars, know in detail about the objects displayed in the gallery. Students may be helped greatly in their education by displaying objects to them according to the syllabi in schools/colleges. By carrying out lecture and practical demonstration programme, students of Botany and Zoology can be taught how to conduct Field Collection and how to preserve the collection in-tact. Students and all sections of the public can be made to understand the inseparable relation between Nature and mankind, i.e. between fauna, flora, etc., and mankind by displaying lecture programme, slide and film show inside the Auditorium of the museum. This will help to maintain the ecological balance. A museum can greatly help the research scholars by making available to them all the reference books written about the objects displayed in the gallery and the museum. This will help them know the tradition, custom, ethics, culture etc. of ancient time and also distinction between the ancient creatures and those of to-day.

Regarding the outward knowledge given by the museum, students and people in remote areas who have no opportunities to visit museums, may be given opportunities by a museum. After selecting a fixed number of students from schools and colleges and carrying them to the field, the museum can impart knowledge about the fauna and flora. By displaying the various features of the jungles as well as the different types of animal, the museum can instil awareness among the students to save environment and ecology instead of destroying them.

For people living in remote villages, the museum can arrange mobile exhibition, i.e. display the objects of the Museum in a mobile van from village to village. Again, museums can make mini-dioramas for displaying the unclean condition of village house-holds, absence of proper toilets, unavailability of pure drinking water, living of inmates contiguous to domestic animals and the out-break of diseases due to the above conditions. If this is done, the museum will be able to help to make villages healthy and prosperous.

Conclusion

The value and usefulness of the objects kept in the State Museum to protect and preserve the history and culture of Manipur in-tact, for the prosperity is very high. Therefore, it is the obligatory responsibility of everybody to know their value and

protect them with love and care. Further, if the electronic media produces regular features related with the State Museum will greatly help in spreading knowledge to the public. Lastly, in education it is highly essential to employ the museum as an instrument for acquiring advanced and complete knowledge. Therefore, it is highly indispensable to develop our State Museum at the national level.

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