SCOPE FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENT

Chapter XI
11.1 Probable Site Museums

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The Site Museums play a very important role in bringing forth the life style, culture and facets of a country through the ages. To quote Sir John Marshall, When Harappa and Mohen-jo Daro was un-earthed, the world was stunned to see Indian Civilization being taken back in one bound to three thousand years before Christ. Site Museums are of great use to students. Every educational institution worth its name has a laboratory for studying Science subjects. The Museum is like a laboratory to students of History, Anthropology, Archaeology and may be even Geography and few other subjects. Hence the importance that is given by U.G.C., the State Government and the respective educational institutions in building up these scientific laboratories should equally be given for developing Museums and Site Museums.

In India this is not the case. One very good way to understand the benign neglect meted out to Museums is to compare the per capita expenditure incurred with that of other countries. Comparing it with the Western countries would not be correct. Even when comparing it with countries like Malaysia or Thailand, we show up very poorly. In these places it is three times that of India.

This lack of attention to the Museum movement is now quite well known and the authorities are trying to improve the conditions. It may be mentioned here that each council in U.K. (which can be comparable to our Rural Municipality/Panchayat) has a library and Museum depicting the past history of the place. It is therefore time that the Government and U.G.C. consider this point and arrange funds for opening more Museums and Site Museums with the intension of educating students, scholars, and the public at large about our past.
heritage of which currently they only have a sketchy theoretical knowledge.

Apart from sculpture and architectural work, the craftsmanship in textiles, paintings, manuscripts, wood and leather articles and ornaments are fabulous particularly in today's context. If these are not excavated, preserved and displayed, India's cultural greatness in terms of handicrafts will disappear and historians of the future will have to go to the British Museum to learn that centuries ago, India could create superb objects of art and industry. Although the Museum movement has picked up considerably after Independence, when we visit Museums particularly the smaller ones, we feel the lack of vitality. Hence it is very necessary that the higher authorities should provide the necessary stimulus in terms of motivating and training the staff and provide the finances to awaken and sustain the vitality and quality of Museums.

Lack of vitality amongst the Museum personnel specially the Site Museums is one of the major causes of the poor state of Museums in our country. The pay scales of most Curators of small Museums is very poor. Their pay is lower than that of University professors and lecturers. Where as the pay of the officers of the Site Museums attached to Universities is as per U.G.C. scale. The pay of the lower staff are therefore worse. The pay scales of the Directors of some of the big Museums are good but the disparity with the subordinate staff is quiet large. This affects the morale of the bulk of the Museum personnel resulting in their lack of enthusiasm and vitality.

The Planning Commission and the Department Of Culture are the bodies responsible for the allocation of funds. These organizations do not give the importance that is due to
Museums. This is a very short sighted policy as Museums particularly Site Museums can bring about a sense of pride amongst the population and also make them feel that India is one country. Further good Museums attract a lot of wealthy foreigners.

The plan budget of the Museum sector should be revised so that at least the personnel donot feel neglected and left out of the main stream. This itself will go a long way in boosting the morale of the Site Museum personnel. They will in turn be motivated to make their Museums attractive with whatever they have. Again it is very much necessary that the Cultural Department join hands with the Tourism Department so that many Museums still uncared for are brought into the travel circuit.

This is the era of professionalism in all spheres of activities. Museum heads must not only know their subject well but must also have a good idea of management. Business management as applied to Museums is alien to most of the top officials of the Museums in India, more so in Site Museums.

In some State run Museums and even in ones run by Central Government, I.A.S officers have often been posted as Directors. This results in the loss of a good public administrator who may not have a good knowledge about the Museums. So it would be better if Museum managers are taken from specialized spheres like Archaeology, Anthropology, History, Museology, Zoology etc.

Specialization in these areas is certainly useful for the Museums but many do not have the skills required for the efficient running of Museums. To meet the needs for this a number of Universities have M.A/ M.Sc courses in Museology. Unfortunately students completing
these courses are also hesitant to manage Museums. As there is no interaction between Museums, Site Museums and the University Museology Department so these students do not learn the practical aspects at all. Museology is an applied science and hence cannot be taught only in the class rooms as is being done now.

Hence students from the theory based courses of Museology are not readily acceptable for appointment in the Museums.

It is absolutely essential that students are given a thorough grounding in the practical aspect of running a Museum inside a Museum and not in a class room. Unfortunately this does not happen even in Universities which have Museums attached to it. Infact an M.A/M.Sc in Museology would not be able to guide excavation work and they will feel shaky to do any restoration or preservation work even of an elementary nature.

Dating of artefacts and art objects also is an important work of a Museum particularly in a Site Museum. If practical work is done in this field while studying Museology, it will help the students in their future course of work. If necessary the students can be taken at excavation sites to see the restoration work and the day to day running of Museums. Museum management should also be taught in the classroom.

Top personnel from remote Site Museums should be given a chance to visit the bigger Museums in the country and abroad. This will not only broaden their out look but will also create enthusiasm in them. Museum workers from all levels should be encouraged to go out so that an awareness is created in them which they intum can spread among the masses.
Finance has always been a problem in Museums and will continue to be so in our
country as most of the people here are hardly interested in the heritage. Museum managers
should be allowed to interact directly with the planning commission authorities when the
planned budget is being drawn up and allocated. Direct contacts and appropriate case
presentations go a long way as far as fund allocation by the Planning Commission is
concerned.

Funds are allocated by the Government to Museums to buy art work. The Curator
should see that these funds are properly utilized and good quality art material is purchased.
This will lead to the betterment of Museums.

Now a days every item of any interest to the public is commercialized, be it sports,
fashion or a serial on the television. The Museum can also be commercialized in the hands
of an astute advertisement company or public relation firms. A cricketer who once upon
a time may have earned Rs-250 per match earns crores after proper advertisement. A
Museum if properly advertised would come in the fore front and will also get sponsors for
different kinds of work.

The replicas of different art pieces in the Museum are very much in demand by the
visitors. Replicas of antiquities if properly made under Museum supervision can also fetch
handsome amounts of money. This would also generate employment among crafts men
and bring long forgotten art and antiques into the Indian or foreign household as decorative
and educative pieces.

Visits to a Museum is considered boring, particularly to school children. But a visit to a
television studio is enjoyed by adults and children alike. This is because the place is made very interesting by lively programmes like quiz and other contests which incidentally attracts sponsors also.

A creative person can make a programme on art and antiquities and through a television channel project the usefulness of Museums in our life. A sponsor can be arranged to telecast the programme which would help to make the Museum a popular place. It may also bring in some money. The most important thing is that the Museum then would come into public lime light with little expenditure on the part of the Museum.

A sound and light show is another very good method of popularizing the Museums. This is also a source of revenue. The Red Fort, Delhi and the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata, to name a few run their shows very successfully. Combining a large computer screen with the light and sound show could make the programme even more interesting. Infact computers can give a very big boost to Museums not only in turns of its internal documentation, administration etc. but they can be used to show virtual images of the Civilization that was and have visitors walk through them. This could be a miniature scale of what is being done in various Disney Lands and theme parks. The computer could also be coupled to various security devises and video cameras to keep a 24 hour vigil on what is happening and send signals trough the phones to the Curator s house in the event of any problems outside working hours. Hence it is essential that computers are installed in all Museums irrespective of size or location.

The village has been the basis of Indian life culture over the centuries. It is only after
industrialization that towns and cities are playing a more important part. Village life depiction over the ages in a Museum through the diorama is a new concept. With modern technology these dioramas can show life like movements along with light and sound and could be a very attractive item for visitors.

The Town Hall in Kolkata has done something like this, depicting the life of our ancestor in the 19th and early 20th centuries in Kolkata. It attracts a large number of visitors. In Site Museums some such measures can be adopted and sound and light shows can also be held at excavation sites.

Actually if a Museum manager is innovative, a lot of ways can be found to make the Museum more interesting to the public and in the process as more people visit the Museum more revenue can be earned.

One of the functions of Museums are educating the masses and also the scholars. So it is essential that a Museum should have a good library of its own. A Museum without a library in it is incomplete. Though it may be small, a library should be attached to the Museum for the benefit of the museologists, the researchers, interested readers and the staff of the Museum. As it is not a public library, the selection of books will depend upon the scope of the Museum. As photography, modeling, drawing, painting and cataloging are included in the subject of Museology, it is the duty of the librarian in a Site Museum to see that literatures on these lines are made available in the library.

The Archaeological Survey Of India, New Delhi has a rich library. It preserves various old records, reports, old books and journals in addition to the up to date literatures on the
subject. They also possess photographs of each and every Archaeological Site of importance and the objects are also preserved here. The Site Museums can take this library as a model and start such libraries in their own premises in a smaller way so that a scholar or a researcher can consult the libraries during their work. If not in the same building, a small room can be built inside the campus where a librarian can sit with books. Of course this need funds as books are costly. However, journals and periodicals and other books can be procured from the library of the Archaeological Survey Of India, free or at a lower cost. Museums can be made a place for cultural exchange. Museums can have a meeting with the guardians and teachers of schools and send groups of children from one Site Museum to another Site Museum where the expenses would be subsidized by the Government. The Department Of Culture, New Delhi can initiate such student exchange programmes with collaboration of the Education Department in the States. This will promote national integration.

After World War II, all Museums including Site Museums were gradually being recognized as educational institution and so it was felt that temporary exhibition of collections became necessary to give a chance to the visitor to see the Museum treasures. For setting up such exhibitions, space is required which is not always available in a Site Museum. In that case one room may be taken up for temporary exhibition. Though this means a lot of hard work and upsetting the Museum for the time being but it will attract more public and create a Museums awareness. Temporary exhibitions may also be sent to different locations as traveling exhibitions. The place has to be pre-determined and may be advertised from a few days before. Such traveling or circulatory exhibitions if sent from the Site Museums
in interior locations will help the local people to see and enjoy the collections of a Museum. In various countries of the world, Museums are assisted by suitable grants from welfare institutions and local bodies. In Britain and some other countries, such type of exhibitions are actively assisted by educational authorities and different town and country councils. In our country also the Panchayats and the local municipalities can help the Site Museums to organize such exhibitions and sponsor them at least partially.

The Archaeological Survey of India should increase the number of Site Museums in order to incorporate some potential Archaeological Sites/ Monuments and remains on the basis of their importance which are found located in different states. It is a matter of great satisfaction that attempts in this regard are being taken up by the Survey. eg. Calcutta Circle under the direction of Dr B. Bandopadhyay, (Superintending Archaeologist of the Calcutta Circle) has taken over the charge of Tamluk Museum (ancient Tamralipta, a port town of significance). As this Museum is taken over by the Survey, it will have a better future both from the standpoint of administration and finance.

An Annual General get together of all the Curators of the Site Museums if convened by the Director General at Delhi, where the problems of respective Site Museums can be discussed and a co-ordinated effort taken towards their development. Here, in such a meeting more emphasis should be given on exploration, excavation, purchase and exchange by respective Circles. This will enhance the collection of the Site Museums and can improve the possibilities of getting more visitors from near by localities, neighbouring places and also from foreign countries. There is enough scope for Museums which can be controlled
by the Archaeological Survey Of India or State Directorate. Site Museums are of great benefit to society and should be encouraged and patronized both by the public and the Government.

India has a great cultural heritage and there are so many places in India where Site Museums can be set up for the benefit of the people at large. A few prospective places where Site Museums need to be set up immediately is given below. These prospective sites are, Mandu (Madhya Pradesh, district- Dhar), Jagjibanpur (West Bengal, district Malda), Dholavira(Gujarat, district Katch), Gaur(West Bengal, district Malda), Chandraketugar (Barasat, district North 24 Parganas), Mangalkot(West Bengal, district Burdwan) and so on. A short resume of the probable Site Museums are discussed here.

1) Mandu (Madhya Pradesh, District Dhar)

Mandu is a historic town in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh built on a spur jutting out of the Vindhya Range. Mandu is surrounded by chasms and ravines on one side and the Nimar plains on the other.

It was originally the fort capital of the Parmar rulers of Malwa. Towards the end of the 13th century it came under the Sultans of Malwa, the first of whom renamed it Shadiaba or City Of Joy.

It is a 14 hour journey by night train from Delhi to Indore which is 100kms from Mandu. It takes 3 hour road journey from Indore to Mandu via Mhow.

Seventy five monuments lie scattered across this 8sq miles of plateau town and are looke
At Mandu Fort
after by the Archaeological Survey of India. The architecture in Mandu is predominantly in the Indo- Islamic style. The Royal Enclave houses several monuments belonging to different eras. The prime attraction is the Jahaz Mahal, which looks like an anchored ship and was built in the late 15th century A.D. by Ghiyas-Uddin Khalji. It was here in the Nahar Jharokha or the Tiger Balcony, Emperor Jahangir conferred the title of Shah Jahan upon his son Prince Khurram.

The monuments at Mandu are scattered in the neighbourhood of the market. Other monuments near Rewa Kund are attributed to Baz Bahadur's period. On the crest of the hill above Rewa Kund stands the pavilion of Rani Rupamati. The romance between Baz Bahadur and Rani Rupamati constitute many folklores of this region.

Such a historic place definitely needs a Site Museum although a small Museum is located in the Elephant's stable, the top of which was used as a guard room in the historic period. There is enough prospect of converting it to a Site Museum as it will surely attract visitors. The site of Mandu is gradually becoming a place of tourist interest in recent times. The place contains historical remnants right from Dilwar Khan's period to Mughal times till the early part of the 18th century when it passed into the hands of the Marathas in 1732 A.D. After that the capital of Malwa was shifted to Dhar and Mandu became a ghost town.

Though abandoned for the past four centuries there is enough attraction in these ruins where the Archaeological Survey Of India could make plans for organizing a proper Site Museum. Then the history of this place will be more publicly known. Students and researchers will also gain if a proper Site Museum is set up in this area.
2) Jagjibanpur (West Bengal, District Malda)

Extensive excavations of the mound Tula-Bhita carried out by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal since 1995 has brought to light a large Buddhist establishment in Jagjibanpur, along the Indo-Bangladesh boarder in Malda district of West Bengal. This was probably one of the biggest Buddhist monasteries of India during the Pala period. It is situated at a distance of 41kms East of Malda town and is within the jurisdiction of the Block and Police Station, Habibpur.

The river Punarbhava, flows to the East of the village Jagjibanpur. A channel locally called Barendi flows through the West, North and East of Tula-Bhita. Before excavation work started, an extremely important copper plate charter of Sri Mahendra Pala Deva of the Pala Dynasty was discovered. Apart from this, a tiny bronze image and a stone image of Buddha was also discovered in March 1987. In 1990, the site was brought under the protection of the Government of West Bengal as a State Protected Site.

The mound Tula-Bhita (the name is from the big Simul tree on the mound) was occupied by the refugees from Bangladesh in 1972. So the primary excavations were disturbed. However excavations are undertaken regularly since 1996 after the inhabitants have been shifted. There are other mounds beside Tula-Bhita. They are Akhir Danga, Nim Danga, Mai-Bhita and Lakshmi Dhibi. Other Archaeological Sites have also been identified in different plots.
There are six principle layers of deposits from the existing surface level to the natural soil. The recorded strata and the antiquities that have come through excavations so far have indicated that the site was not occupied prior to the Palas. Extensive digging operations were carried out from 1995 to 2000 under the direction of Sri Amol Roy, with a view to expose the buried monastery and to understand the cultural sequence of the site. A substantial part of a brick built monastery with other essential components were uncovered.

From the plan of the structure it is evident that the monastery belonged to the 9th century A.D. and may be compared to the Vikramsila Mahavihara at Antichak in Bhagalpur district. The pattern is also similar to that of the excavated monasteries at Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, Udaygiri in Orissa and monastery number 8 at Nalanda in Bihar. Burnt bricks of different sizes with fine clay for bonding has been used extensively. Unlike other Eastern Indian monasteries, only bricks has been used and no stones. Several divine figures of both Brahmanical and Buddhist origin found at Jagjibanpur indicate that there was no discontentment amongst religious sects.

This Buddhist site at Tula-Bhita is significant from the Archaeological as well as historical point of view. It is most essential that a Site Museum is built here to help the scholars who can have a thorough knowledge of the scenario of this period when the artefacts are labeled and displayed properly in the Museum. The storage collections will also give a detailed account of the history of the imperial Palas. The name of the
builder of this monastery as referred in the legend of the seal is Sri Vajradeve-Karika.

The name of the monastery was Nandadirghi which was named after a major water body in the vicinity called Nanda dighi.

The conservation of the excavated structure started under the guidance of Dr. Debala Mitra, (Chairperson of West Bengal Board of Advisory on Archaeology). The action has already been taken by the Government to construct a Site Museum at Jagjibanpur with a view to exhibit the antiquities and other artifacts recovered through excavations along with illustrations and models so that visitors, scholars and researchers can have a better understanding of the biggest Buddhist site in West Bengal.

3) Dholavira (Gujrat, Katch District)

Dholavira is one of the two largest Harappan settlements discovered in India. It is a modest village in Vhachau- Taluka of district Katch in Gujarat. It is surrounded from all sides by the Great Rann Of Katch.

The proto-historic mound here was first discovered in 1967-68 by Jagatpati Joshi of the Survey. He made preliminary investigations and then declared Dholavira to be the largest Indus settlement in India. Through further work of area survey and surface study carried out by R.S. Bisht of the Excavation Branch of the Survey and his team it was amply demonstrated that the city complex that existed here was much larger and more multidivisional with suburban establishments of meticulous planning.
The excavation has confirmed, salient features of city planning which was noticed at the site and also provided a stratigraphic sequence starting from pre-Harappan to early-Harappan, late-Harappan to post-Harappan period through an enormous, regular, occupational deposit obtained at the mound.

The pre-Harappan people who were the first occupants of the site, settled here sometimes in 3rd millennium B.C. They knew the use of molded bricks, manufactured wheel made pottery of different shapes and also knew the technical know-how of copper working and stone dressing. Next came the Harappans who added from inside a 5m wall to the existing defenses. Probably during the Harappan period, the city suffered extensive damage through an earth quake or a geotectonic movement of great intensity and suddenness.

The Indus culture maintained its classical character in all spheres before decline set in. The decline coincides with the arrival of a new set of people from Sind who however continued the classical tradition. Decline became more rapid after the desertion of the city by the rulers and the elite. When a new group of people came after the desertion, they lived in circular stone houses which are still in vogue in Katch and are locally called Kudas. They were using the same ceramics and other items like their predecessors. After this post-urban nomadic phase the site was never re-occupied.

The town planning at the site unearthed at Dholavira is very astounding and can be compared with the modern day planning of a city. The astronomical precession with which
the city was built is no mean achievement. The city proper was a perfect rectangle bounded by massive mud brick masonry wall. On the basis of their relative location and layout the three principal part of the city has been named as citadel, middle town and lower town which corresponds to the Rig Vedic terms of Parama, Madhyama and Avama. The citadel and the middle town though separated had interconnected fortification system. All the three were within the general fortification.

Since the two great Museums of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa is in Pakistan, the Archaeological Survey Of India should try to establish a Site Museum in Dholavira as early as possible. This will show how even in such an early age people of India knew how to plan a town in a perfect way. Visitors and researchers will be benefited to know that our Civilization has gone far beyond and can boast of being one of the most ancient Civilization of the world comparable in time to the Sumerian period. This will also create an awareness among the Indian people of our ancient heritage and if the Site Museum is established, people from all walks of life will definitely come here to have a look at the site as it can be as famous as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

4) Mangalkot (West Bengal, Burdwan District)

The Archaeological Site of Mangalkot in the Katwa subdivision of Burdwan district at the confluence of the Ajoy and Kunur is 30kms South-East of Pandu Rajar Dhibi, the famous
chalcolithic site of Bengal. In Mediaeval literature that is in Manasha Mangal Kabya, we get the story of Chand Sadagar who sailed via Ujani Nagar located near Mangalkot. In 1975, the Department of Archaeology, Calcutta University under the supervision of Amita Ray undertook a systematic exploration in this region. The exploration yielded valuable materials like black and red ware, Northern black polished ware, punch marked and cast coins, copper objects, stone sculptures and terracotta figurines belonging to Maurya, Sunga, Kushana, Gupta and post-Gupta periods. These materials indicate a Civilization that existed at the site from the chalcolithic to the historical time. Large systematic excavation started in 1986 and continued from this period onwards.

The most important finds of the excavation are iron slags, iron tools etc. have been found from the lowest strata. This shows that the chalcolithic people had used iron from the very beginning. Excavation has also revealed a large number of animal bones mostly of bovine species, besides jungle fox, pig, deer, birds, tortoise and fish. These show the dietary habits of the people in the chalcolithic phase. Rice husk has also been noticed in the core of the pottery. Finds from period 2 shows that the people
became more and more dependent on iron technology. The antiquities traced from period 3 include silver punched mark coins and many copper coins, lockets, bangles etc as also some terracotta figurines like a buff coloured panchachuda yakshini of the Maurya period. Period 4 is represented by a unique structural complex all made in well burnt bricks. This period also shows the Kushan influence. Copper was abundantly used as jewelry and house hold objects. From different finds it is quiet clear that during the Kushana period Mangalkot became a thriving center of life.

Period 5 depicts the Gupta time. The deposits of period 6 range in date from the 8th to the 18th century comprising of different types of potteries including Chinese porcelains, two Muslim coins and two coins of East India Company.

It is essential that a Site Museum be set up in Mangalkot as the location of this site shows very clearly that it is a major concentration zone of chalcolothic culture in West Bengal. The evidence found in 2m thick deposit suggests a habitation of chalcolothic culture in the region for a few 100 years. The discovery that iron occurred in this cultural phase from its beginning along with bone, makes it necessary to re-examine the chalcolithic cultural phase which will only be possible if a Site Museum is developed here with proper display of the artefacts developed from the site. Such studies are not possible unless the exhibits are constantly viewed by the scholars and researchers. The
occurrence of bones shows that animals were domesticated during this period. The remains of bones like jungle fox and dear shows that people belonging to this age were hunters and they hunted the animals for food and also consumed fish, crab and tortoise available in the near by rivers and marshes. Rice seems to have been also a staple food. If a Site Museum is set up here with a diorama depicting the daily life of the local people of Mangalkot during these phases, it would be a worth while seeing for the visitors and they would be very much interested to bring their family and children into the Museum to have a look at what was the prevailing condition so many 1000 years ago.

From the chalcolithic period onwards, Mangalkot had direct communication with Northern and Central India which is very clear in the transitional phases. The occurrence of the increasing use of iron and a new type of ceramic industry which are mostly found in miniature pot are the special traits of this region. If all the artefacts are displayed properly, it will show that the region has witnessed all the cultural phases which were contemporaneously present in mid and Eastern India. The seals and sealing as well as the massive structure in bricks belong both to the Kushana and the Guptas.

Mangalkot happens to be the only site in West Bengal which provides important information for reconstructing History of the development of the pottery-craft of Bengal. This will be an interesting study material for the scholars, if the potteries of different times are displayed in glass cases in chronological order. Mangalkot reveals also the terracotta art on plaques or in round shape.

There is no doubt that the emergence of a Site Museum in an important center like
this will give us the story of the days of glory from the 1st century B.C. to the 6th century A.D. if not still later. If constructed in the latest technique and with modern management system, the Site Museum of Mangalkot will be able to compete with other Site Museums of the world as it has a rich stock of our cultural heritage which cannot be displayed at present due to lack of space. It would be very much interesting to gather the history of Mangalkot from the site itself, rather than see the objects in Museums such as Burdwan or Calcutta. Then the objects will lose their identity as they will be in a far off place and not in the site of their origin.

5) **Excavation At Dum Dum Mound (Kolkata District 24 Parganas)**

The mound of DumDum at Rashtra Guru Avenue of Clive’s Colony in South DumDum Municipality is to the North of famous Clive’s house. This area is an extension of Kolkata metropolis and could be approached from Jessore road and also from DumDum road.

According to tradition, this area was well occupied during the Mughal period. It probably also formed a part of the Sena kingdom of Bengal. In the literary records of the Sena period there is mention of Ariadaha which is closed to DumDum.

DumDum comes from the word DamDama which is a Persian word meaning a raised mound. Clive’s house which was known to the natives as the Kila or Fort stood on a raised mound. It is perhaps one of the oldest existing buildings of Kolkata.

The main objective of excavation at DumDum mound was to detect and establish the nature
of settlement in the area. The remains of early settlement in Kolkata has been witnessed at Bethun College Campus from the trenches dug for a different purpose. This initiated further field work in the metropolis.

As it was very near Kolkata, the archaeologists neglected the place so far. But the colonial historians had a theory that the mound had been fortified in very ancient times. Its real archaeological importance has been first established and understood by the Kolkata Circle of the Archaeological Survey Of India in early 2001 when many potsherds, brick bats etc were noticed strewn over the place denoting its antiquity.

So far two cultural periods have been marked in the excavation and seven major layers have been encountered. Layers 3 to 7 marked as period I belonged to early Historic period c. 2nd-1st century B.C. to c. 11th century A.D.

A stone image of Mahisashuramadrini datable to c. 9th-10th century A.D. is the only stone sculpture found here. But it is rich in terracotta findings. Some of the terracotta plaques are of Sunga and Kushana style. Though they are found in broken state, they are remarkable pieces of art and can easily be compared with similar plaques from Chandraketugarh and Tamluk in Bengal and distant places like Ahichhatra, Kausambi,
The discovery of a mould suggests that there was a manufacturing center here. Excavation of DumDum mound is a milestone so far as history of origin and antiquity of Kolkata is concerned. It has proved that Kolkata was inhabited through centuries by civilized people who used materials normally found in an urban settlement. It is urgently required that a Site Museum be set up in the vicinity where the local finds could be exhibited. Here if objects are properly displayed, visitors and researchers will gather a good knowledge from the terracotta plaques of the period which not only depicts the flora and fauna of the time but also takes back the history of Bengal to Sunga-Kushana period. From the depiction of a one-horned rhino in terracotta, Zoologists suggests that this type of one horned rhino once grazed in the Sunderban area. Finds from the excavation if properly explained and demonstrated will create immense interest, and when compared with similar finds from Tamluk and Chandraketugarh will establish the fact that may be this settlement was an extension of Chandraketugarh. One terracotta piece depicting a mother and child is a popular one in ancient Indian Art similar to the type from Ahichhatra, that places in Bengal had a connection with other parts of India can only be established if a good study of objects can be made in Site Museums. Pottery assemblage from DumDum mound is also remarkable. It falls into six groups

Red ware, dull red ware, gray ware, black ware, black and
red ware and porcelain. Among the other finds are coins, beads, semi precious stones, ornaments, household objects, stone and metal objects and miscellaneous objects.

Thus the evidences of a much more earlier flourishing settlement than the people thought of was present in Kolkata has come to light by this excavation. This excavation has established how the village settlement gradually turned into an urban settlement. If this is depicted in the Site Museum which can be built in this place with charts and other demonstrations, the people of Kolkata will become very proud of their cultural heritage, as still now Calcuttans thought that the city is only a few 100 years old. This will take our history back prior to the Christian era and depict a sophisticated culture.

As the place is not far at all and can be reached by metro, bus or car, people will go there readily and a Museum awareness will be created even among the ordinary masses.

6) Chandraketugarh (West Bengal District 24 Parganas)

Chandraketugarh is in the Deganga police station area of North 24 parganas district in West Bengal. It is situated about 40kms North-East of Kolkata approachable by the Kolkata-Barasat- Bashirhat road.

The ancient city of Chandraketugarh may be ranked with the famous Archaeological locations like Gandhara, Mathura and Taxila. This ancient city now comprises of several villages like Berachampa, Ranakhola, Ghoraponta, Shanpukur, Hadipur etc. King Chandraketu
built a Fort or Garh here in the hoary past. His capital was at Berachampa. Legend says that Chandraketu married the princes of Tamluk. He was asked by Sayed Abbas Ali, an Arab who came with twenty two followers to his court to embrace Islam but he refused. Sayad Abbas Ali appealed to Emperor Allauddin Khilji in the name of Islam and Chandraketu was defeated by the force sent by him. Abbas Ali was also killed in 760 A.D. and was buried at Haroa.

Chanderaketugarh looked like a hillock full of trees. In 1906, Mr. A. H. Longhurst, the Superintendent of the Eastern Zone of the Archaeological Survey Of India came to this place. Then came Dr. R.D. Banerjee but no excavation work was started till some few objects from the site was acquired by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta in 1911. With the persistent efforts of the noted antiquarian, Kalidas Dutta of Jainagar- Majilpur and the enthusiasm of Kunja Gobinda Goswami, (the excavator of Bangarh) some efforts were made towards the excavation of this place. In 1955, during the History- Congress in Kolkata, a sculpture of the Sun God unearthed from this place created excitement among the Archaeologists. Mr. Satyen Roy, an employee of the Eastern Railway living in the locality came forward with plans of excavating the mounds. The Asutosh Museum Of Indian Art started a trial excavation programme in 1956-57 which was carried on for a month or so every winter till 1967-68. South of Berachampa was found to be most significant archaeologically.

The antiquities discovered here belonged to 7 periods starting from Pre-Mauryan (c.600-30B.C.E) to Pala- Chandra- Sena(c.750-1250C.E.) including the Sunga- Kushana-
Gupta and post-Gupta period between them. The excavation report of Chandraketugarh was finally compiled and published by Mr. Enamul Haque.

The excavations covered five different sites Berachampa of Deuliya, Khanamihirer Dhibi, Itakhola paddy field, Noon gola and Hadipur. The excavations showed that there was a well developed urban complex which can be compared to the North Indian sites of Ahichchatra, Hastinapur, Vaishali, Mathura and Kausambi. Antiquities consisted of pottery, terracotta figures, plaques, toys, ivory, wood and bronze sculptures, utility items, seals, coins, bead and ivory ornaments and highly developed pottery. Most of the artefacts are displayed in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University, but some local people have collected items and set up their own personal collections.

The excavation at Khanamihirer Dhibi is the only site which is open. This place had a burnt brick temple complex belonging to the post-Gupta period. The terracotta art of Chandraketugarh reached the zenith during the Sunga-Kushan period and started declining during the Gupta period. The excavation and exploration at Chandraketugarh are greater in number than those at Tamralipti.

The excavations at Chandraketugarh by the Asutosh Museum of Calcutta University started in 1956-57 and continued till 1964-65. But except for declaring the site and the
excavated remains at this area by the Archaeological Survey of India, no efforts have been made to set up a Site Museum in the locality. The relatively small scaled excavations of Chandraketugarh which has a continuous sequence of cultural remains from the 4th century B.C. to the 12th century A.D is not sufficient for a comprehensive understanding of the society and culture of such an extensive site. A part of the rampart wall was excavated by the Excavation Branch, Archaeological Survey Of India, Bhubaneswar under the supervision of Dr. Bimol Bandopadhyay, Superintending Archaeologist (Calcutta Circle) in 1998. It is not known whether the Archaeological Survey Of India under whose custody these sites are presently preserved has any plans of further excavation in this area. The only report available on Chandraketugarh are the year to year reports in the Archaeological Survey's Annual Review. These Reports are brief and do not offer enough picture on this site.

Individuals of the vicinity like P.K. Goswami, Abdul Jabbar, Asad-uj-Jaman and D.K. Maite have collected many artefacts from the site. D.K. Maite's collections are just next to Khanamiherir Dhibi and may be termed as a representative of a Site Museum. Sri Maite has many coins, broken images, dolls, vessels, terracotta figurines and objects, seals and sealing, ceramics etc. in his collections. He has also published a few booklets which contains the past history of Chandraketugarh.
Sri Jabbar Ali’s private collection is in Haroa, but he is now no more and a new private Museum is supposed to come up near his place. Mr. Asad-uj Jaman’s collection is very similar to that of Mr. D.K. Maite. His collections are in his residence cum Museum situated a few kilometers away from the Taki road closer to the Chandraketugarh ramparts. Mr. Jaman said that artefacts are unearthed whenever the soil is dug to build a house or a pond. Both he and Sri D.K. Maite is of the opinion that a local Site Museum is very necessary to make the public aware of the rich cultural heritage of this place. There must be some means also to decipher the ancient written characters. Though the Archaeological Survey of India have put on notice boards near the sites warning trespassers, it would have been better if a proper Site Museum, however small should be arranged at Chandraketugarh.

It is a pity that such priceless treasures still lie buried under the mound of Chandraketugarh. Artefacts will decay and will be lost forever unless proper steps are taken for their preservation and conservation. A large number of antiquities have already found their way to individual collectors and Museums within and outside India. Unless and until a Site Museum is established with collective efforts at this site, it would be difficult to preserve the rich collections. The effort in this direction should come from the Archaeological Survey of India.
7) **Gaur (West Bengal District Malda)**

Gaur was the capital of Bengal in mediaeval times. It is in the Malda district of West Bengal and can be reached by long distance busses or rail from Sealdah.

The majority of monuments at Gaur were built during the early Sultanate period. The early period of Islamic rule in Bengal was a period of harmony when the Hindus and Muslims worked together. The Hussain Shahi period saw remarkable literary and artistic renaissance and also the start of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The architecture that developed during this period had Islamic architecture like domes, arches, glazed tiles etc. as also indigenous Bangla roofs, open porches, brick construction, terracotta decoration etc.

The ancient town of Gaur or Lakshmanavati was the capital of Bengal from the 8th century. The antiquities found from the place primarily belonged to Pala-Sena period and of Muslim rule in Malda. The sculptures and architectural fragments are mostly of the Pala-Sena period up to the Muslim occupation of Malda. They are being kept within an enclosure well protected by the Survey. Unfortunately a few years back many of the valuable remains were stolen and possibly taken to Bangladesh. The present collections although few in numbers may be utilized for building up a small Site Museum covering the history of Gaur from beginning till the desertion in the mediaeval period.

As this place carries a lot of tradition with it and also shows the development of architecture during Hindu and Muslim rule it would be worth to build a Site Museum at Gaur where the relics of buildings could be seen along with displayed objects in the Museum. Broken pieces collected from the buildings is worthwhile to see only at the place from where
Terracotta Work, Dakul Darwaza
Gaur, 15th & 16th Century

Terracotta decoration, Gaur
they have been found. Blow-up photographs, both in colour and also in black and white, map of the area showing location of the ancient remains and monuments may be presented to the visitors. This historic place is a popular one and is being visited almost through out the year specially by people living on the Eastern part of our country. Though the later brick temples of Bengal with their rich terracotta ornamentation have been well documented through the research work of scholars, the terracotta ornamentation used in the decoration of early Islamic structures has received almost no attention.

If a Site Museum is set up here, it would also draw visitors from the weavers of Bengal because the floral and geometric designs on the surfaces of mediaeval Bengali architecture are today part of the designs that are seen on tangail, dhanekhali and Dhakai sarees.

8) Sirpur (Chhattisgarh)

A flourishing trade center on the river Mahanadi, Sirpur was famous for its art, cultura and learning. Though its King Mahashivagupta Balaarjuna was a Shaiva, he had a great respect for Buddhism. The Chinese traveler Hieun- Tsang and the famous philosopher Nagarjuna visited his court. Now this small town in Chhattisgarh, 80kms from Raipur has come to limelight due to the efforts of
the Archaeological Survey Of India. Excavations reveal here the remains of a city that was four times as big as Nalanda.

Early excavations were undertaken by Dr. M. G. Dixit from 1953-1956. At that time the Archaeological Survey of India had unearthed two Buddhist Viharas, Anand Prabhu Kutir and Swastik Vihar. The dig had received international attention because some rare bronze statues were unearthed, that of divinities Padampani, Avalokiteshwar, Manjushree and Bajrapani. Subsequent excavations revealed three more monasteries; about fifty more are estimated to be lying underground. All the monasteries have a hall, a pillared verandah and cells at the back. Quite a few months ago the Archaeological Survey Of India discovered a residential complex near the temples. The two underground chambers here were probably used for meditation for Hindu monks. According to the Superintending Archaeologist at Raipur these chambers date back to the 6th century.

According to Hieun-Tsang, Sirpur had an Ashoka Stupa, at least hundred Viharas and one hundred fifty temples. The Laxman Temple, Rama Temple and the Gandheshwar Temple have been resurrected. Twentyfour copper plate inscriptions have been unearthed at Sirpur which shows that the King had respect for all religions. Vasata, mother of Mahashivagupta was influenced by Buddhism and was a very able lady. All these facts and other historical records can be deciphered from the copper plate inscriptions. Narrative sculptures on Panchatantra near the Buddhist monuments have added to the sites historic significance.

Now Archaeologist A.K. Sharma is excavating the area that is believed to be the
The Archaeological Survey of India have undertaken a project of excavating this region which is sure to throw more light on the life and times of the period. It would be even more interesting if the Archaeological Survey of India can set up a Site Museum in this place with so many historical evidences strewn all around. There are inscriptions at the site relating to Hieun- Tsang's visit and a Chinese coin dated 639 A.D. points to a constant flow of visitors from the neighbouring country. In a similar way, visitors, scholars and researchers of this century will also be attracted to see the site and also inscriptions, artefacts and other objects collected from the place kept in the Site Museum adjacent to the site.

9) Dwarka (Gujarat)

To protect the Yadavas from the wrath of Jarasandha, the Emperor of Magadha, Krishna went to the West coast and built the fortified town of Dwarka on the site of the ancient Kushasthali. Dwarka was submerged in the sea 36 years after the Mahabharata war.

It is a debatable point whether Krishna actually existed or it is a myth. Some Archaeologists and Historians are now willing to accept the common mans faith that Krishna really existed, and it has a basis in fact.

The strongest Archaeological support comes from the structures discovered under
the seabed off the coast of Dwarka in Gujarat by the pioneering team led by Dr. S.R. Rao, one of India's most famous Marine Archaeologist. Sri Rao has to his credits the excavation of the Harappan site of Lothal in Gujarat. His discovery about Dwarka is an important landmark in the history of India. This has proved the historicity of Mahabharata and the existence of Dwarka city. It has also established a continuity of the Indian Civilization from the Vedic age to the present day.

There are some Archaeological finds that attest Krishna to be a historical figure. Excavations at Bedsa (near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh) have unearthed the remains of a temple of 300B.C. where Krishna, Balarama and other Yadava heroes like Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Satyaki are identified. In the Palitana plates of Samanata Sinhaditya dated 574A.D. Dwarka has been referred to as the capital of the Western coast of Saurashtra where Krishna lived.

Madhav Acharya, Archaeologist at the Haryana Archaeological Department also believes that Krishna very much existed in flesh, blood and bones. The struggle for power in Kurukshetra is not a myth and one of the main characters was Krishna. R.S. Bishal, Director of Excavation and Exploration at the Archaeological Survey Of India, New Delhi believes Krishna to be a historical figure. Professor B.B. Lal, former Director General of Archaeological Survey Of India and author of a recent book on the Saraswati Civilization have also said that it is time to rethink about Krishna's existence. Dr. S.R. Rao writes in his book that long before the Mahabharata period, the Indus Valley Civilization had penetrated deep into Kutch at Dholavira and Surkotada by 3000B.C. It reached its climax between
2800 to 1900 B.C. at Lothal. Rao did an extensive onshore excavation which yielded the evidence of a proto historic settlement of 1600 B.C. destroyed by the sea. Conducting 12 expeditions between 1983 to 1990 Rao identified two under water settlements, one near Dwarka and the other in Bet Dwarka. Rao suggested that Krishna occupied these places around 1500B.C. The excavations show that Dwarka was an urban centre with a well fortified township. It had certain specialized industries like boat building and metal working as evidenced by a copper lota found in the sea bed. The people of Bet Dwarka knew the use of iron. The general layout of the city of Dwarka described in the ancient text is similar to that of the submerged city.

Among the objects recovered from the seabed was a seal with the images of bull, unicorn and goat engraved in an anti clock wise direction. Such seals has been referred to in the ancient text of Harivamsa where it is stated that every citizen of Dwarka should carry a mudra as a mark of identification and none without a seal should enter it.

Among artefacts recovered were pottery carrying inscriptions in old Indo- Aryan script that were found to be 3,528 years old. Low zinc brass produced at Lothal in 2300-2000 B.C. is similar in composition to that of a bronze bell excavated at Dwarka. The town
was well fortified with engineering skill and the inscriptions in old Indo-Aryan script shows the literacy of the inhabitants. N.S. Rajaram says that in the Harappan and Indus Valley seals there are many references to Krishna and other Mahabharata characters some of which date back to 5000 years. The word Vrishni appeared on many Harappan seals. Vrishni was Krishna’s clan. Recent excavations have shown that Harappan Civilization thrived in a region where the Vrishni clan lived.

Sri Rajaram is of opinion that the site discovered by Rao is actually a later Dwarka than the one built by Krishna. He thinks that Krishna’s Dwarka probably lie below the existing ruins. Another reason is that the ruins of Krishna’s Dwarka must fit the ancient texts but these remains fits better with the early Harappan period (3100 B.C) than the post-Harappan period. Some of the artefacts recovered from the seabed show a strong affinity with West Asia specially Babylon.

Whether this Dwarka was Krishna’s Dwarka or a city built up at a later date, Dwarka undoubtedly is full of remains that will help to reveal a glorified past. With a Museum set up at Dwarka, may be in-between Dwarka and Bet Dwarka, people of all classes will go there to see the artefacts and objects recovered. This is also a place of great pilgrimage and with proper publicity this place will undoubtedly attract tourists and scholars alike. This is the place where the great Karma Yogi of the Bhagawat Gita lived. So not only Indian scholars but scholars from all over
the world will be interested to see this place. So the Archaeological Survey Of India should carry on the effort of continuing the excavation and exploration work in Dwarka and also keep it in mind that this is a very good place for a prospective Site Museum.

10) Hathab (Bhabnagar district, Gujarat)

Hathab is identified with the ancient city of Astakapra located on the Eastern coast of the Gulf of Khambat, 24kms South of Bhavnagar district. The place was referred to by Ptolemy and also in the records of Periplus of Erythrean Sea, a travelogue of the 1st century A.D. by an Alexandrian Greek. The place has also been mentioned in the Ballabhpur copper plate inscription of Dhruva Sena I of Ballabhi and has been identified with Hastakavapra.

The artefacts collected from Hathab may be traced to the Mauryan/post Mauryan period. Both oceanic and riverine trade must have grown greatly in this region. The flourishing trade of this region attracted the attention of Kautiliya who thought strategies of controlling such trade. A copper plate inscription of Hattarakaman of Ballabhpur, which belonged to a later date mentions that Hastakavapra was a part of his dominion under the Maitraka Dynasty.

The excavations done in this place proves the existence of a buried city dating to the early historical period. Evidence points to the existence of town planning and a mud fort. A rich collection of iron and copper implements, tools, weapons, domestic utensils, ornaments,
toilet articles, coins, gold and shell jewellery, toys and other small objects have been unearthed. Besides these there are evidences of ancient mines and shell manufacturing industries. It may be that their owners abandoned the city in haste (6th century A.D.) when the city was sacked by the Arabs or these objects must have been buried due to a natural calamity. It is the only find that represents the early historical period of Saurashtra. A number of Amphoras and Indo Greek coins show the type of exchanges amongst the ship entering the Arabian Sea during this period.

Hathab is situated on the rivulets of Maleshwari River flowing from the North-West to the North-East. Excavations here revealed habitational deposits upto 8ms which belonged to three cultural periods.

**Period I**

The earliest occupation is characterized by copper coin of Appolodotus. A bronze pot of the Mauryan period has been found, which is similar to the one found at Khapra Khodia Caves at Junagarh.

Another remarkable find is a terracotta ceiling with a Brahmi legend and a knob having a swastika design.

**Period II**

**Phase A**

This is characterized by red polished ware, coarse red ware, coarse grey ware and iron implements in domestic and ritual use. Stone pavements with charred ash and upright
symbols in between rectangular and circular stone structures have been unearthed.

**Phase B**

This phase is marked by a rectangular brick structure with post holes.

**Phase C**

This represents a pebble footing mud wall complex with different chambers. People of these phases lived in huts made of perishable materials circular in plan. Circular structure points to a different group of people. Rectangular brick structures with brick wall suggest low wall with roof tile super structure. This phase seems to have been a prosperous one with twin brick wells within the complex. One of the wells yielded plenty of shelled grains.

In addition to stone and brick structures a semi circular vav (sort of step well) in chaitya form has been found. While constructing this vav, the tradition mentioned in ancient texts and the Aparajit Pracha verse have been followed.

In Atharvaveda and Arthashastra, vapra (rampart) and parikha (moat) had been mentioned which guarded the forts on the banks of river or seacoast. Such an elevated periphery was excavated. The mound formed by rail and with flat-topped hill served the purpose of defense.

It was also observed that a moat was dug around the site. The moat was connected with a deep reservoir through which water must have been regulated. There is evidence of
bottomless soakage jars that was connected to the moat to drain off stagnant water. The number of iron weapons like daggers, arrowhead and knives suggests that military defense was well organized.

Many coins have been gathered from the moats that are yet to be studied. Certain silver and lead coins have symbols of chaitya that is three arched hill marked by wavy lines and flanked by crescent chaitya and sun. A seal and a sealing deserve special mention. The seal is datable to Mauryan period and written in Brahmi with a swastika symbol on the reverse. The sealing is datable to Kshatrapa period with a bull flanked by stambha and a legend all round. Apart from these mould have also been found. Deposits of Roman Amphora from Hathab suggest trade with the Western world. Similarly three storage jars found from excavations of Bhogra, 4kms North of Hatab makes one believe that this might have been one of the gateways to India for the incoming traffic from West Asia and Arabia.

The shell artefacts found at Hathab shows that the people here developed a good skill in making interesting objects of shell like bangles with floral motif. The waste was converted
into beads, pendants and inlay work. One remarkable discovery is a sandstone oval slab with script inscribed on it.

A number of broken pieces from the site provide evidence that the ancient city of Hathab was re-constructed from the 5th to the 6th century AD. The excavations at Hathab is instrumental in giving an insight into pre-Mauryan, Mauryan and the Maitraka period and throws a light on the fragmented history of Gujarat Further work in this area is very much essential which will bring to light more information about the flourishing city of Hathab and also about the trade links of India which existed so many centuries before.

A Site Museum constructed here by the Archaeological Survey of India will help visitors who are interested in the socio-economic heritage of our land and also the scholars who are trying to establish the greatness of India that was.
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