CHAPTER TWO

1. Possibility of organizing ethnographical museums in the context of the scope of making ethnographical study in India.

2. Role of the Indian ethnographical museums in relation to the existing socio-economic condition of the country.
ON THE SCOPE OF ETHNOGRAPHICAL STUDY
IN INDIA

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the ethnographical study is specially concerned with the study of the simple pre-literate and pre-industrial simple societies. In this connection, eminent British anthropologists like Mair(1) Beattie(2) and Evans-Pritchard(3) have categorically pointed out that the primitive or tribal societies are the best representative examples of the pre-literate and pre-industrial societies. As an integrated discipline of cultural anthropology, ethnographical study was started initially with the study of primitive isolates all over the world. India was of no exception. The British anthropologists like Rivers, Radcliffe-Brown, Elwin and the scholars of the Indian Civil Service like Hutton, Playfair, Mills and others who made significant contribution in exploring Indian anthropological field mainly concentrated on tribal life. Sarat Chandra Roy, one of the pioneers of Indian Anthropology, restricted his study within the tribal belt of Chotanagpur plateau of Bihar as well. Anthropologists of the

(2) Beattie, John, Other Cultures, pp. 3-5, New York, 1964.
succeeding generation like L.A. Krishna Iyer, K.P. Chattopadhyay, B.S. Guha, D.N. Majumdar and many others did not deviate much from this line particularly during the British rule. Many of the contemporary Indian and foreign anthropologists are working on the tribal life even to-day.

When anthropology established firmly as a scientific discipline, it redrew itself as a study of all kinds of people in all kinds of social and cultural situations. In this respect the American anthropologists have moved very rapidly to accept a part of the responsibility for studying civilized people and such world wide events as industrialization, urbanization, etc. Today it is usual for an anthropologist to study a community connected with or forming part of a civilization or national state. There are recent books by anthropologists about communities in Malaya, Burma, China, Japan, Latin American countries and many more. India is no exception. Emphasis on the study of Indian rural communities both by the foreign and the Indian anthropologists gained ground after independence of India (1947). Accounting the reason for giving much importance to the study of the village communities in India, Srinivas(1) has written "The two five-year plans aim, among other things, to increase agricultural production and to change the social life of our peasantry. An intimate knowledge of the social life of our peasantry in different parts of the country, obtained by men trained to obtain such knowledge, would have been thought helpful in the execution of the plans, in avoiding avoidable human misery and in increasing efficiency."

The caste bound Hindu rural communities in India depending mostly on agriculture and handicrafts built up tightly knit society of their own by maintaining intimate links in different spheres such as economics, religious and social between the neighboring villages. Due to practice of hereditary occupations and rigid way of life according to Hindu religion, the traditional cultures

---

of rural communities are highly integrated. In these respects, the term folk culture as defined by Redfield may be attributed to the cultures of the Indian rural communities. Although only in recent years, the Indian social anthropologists have given attention towards the industrialization, urbanization, community development and many other current issues but the trends of Indian social anthropology at present have been channelised mainly in two directions viz., (I) the study of the tribals and (2) the study of the village communities. Hence in exploring the scope of ethnographical study in India, discussion has been confined here strictly in two aspects i.e. (i) folk culture and (ii) tribal culture.

Folk culture

In India at present 36.07% of people, forming 82% of the country's population, are village dwellers. They live in 5,66,878 scattered villages. In 1947 it was estimated 73% of all gainfully employed people were engaged in agriculture; 18% of these being landless labourers. Agriculture in the country is mostly subsistence farming; 83.5% of all agricultural production being food stuffs. Besides the agricultural classes, the rest of the village population consists mainly of artisan and occupational castes whose economy and lives are largely integrated with the economic and socio-religious life of the peasant communities. The figures as furnished above, show how vast the magnitude of the Indian folk or peasant is even at present. This folk culture has great tradition of its own and is surviving through centuries.

However, as the folk culture here has been reviewed in relation to the study of the ethnographical museums, only three dimensional concrete material traits have been taken into account. In view of the study so far made on this aspect of folk culture, it may be broadly divided into two aspects. They are (i) handicrafts studied by the art connoisseurs and the scholars of the different branches of knowledge; and (ii) certain salient concrete material traits directly associated with
Indian handicrafts if studied from the historical point of view have great tradition of their own. From time immemorial, the village and cottage crafts seemed to have played a pivotal role in the socio-economic life of the Indian people. These cottage industries provided ample employments to the rural folk and thereby played an important role in the process of decentralization of economic power on the rural level. The village communities of craftsmen had always been the centres of the traditional Indian crafts. In the maintenance of continuity of these crafts and their superb standard through the ages, Hindu religion played the most effective role. A craftsman of ancient India traced his descent from 'Vishwakarma', god of all crafts. The belief in mythological origin provided him with a proud religious background from his handiwork and a spiritual incentive to give of his very best. The caste system imposed by the code of 'Manu' not only made the membership of the guild hereditary but also preserved the ancient tradition and prevented or at least kept in check, the degrading influence of foreign thought. Handicrafts essentially of the ornamental kind are generally considered to be the articles of luxury and meant only for decorative purposes. But the rural craftsmen of India always produced requisites of everyday utility for the simple mass of the vast countryside.

Examples of some of the most essential handicrafts of the Indian peasant communities and the names of the artisan communities practising them:

(1) Textile (Tantubai); (2) Leather footwear (Chamar); (3) Wood-works (Sutradhar); (4) Earthen-ware (Kumbhakar); (5) Jewellery (Karnakar); (6) Various ritual objects made of shola (Malakar); (7) Pats or paintings for ritual purposes (Chitrakar); (8) Images of gods and goddesses (Kumar); (9) Iron objects required for various purposes like domestic, agricultural, offensive and defensive purposes etc., (Kamar) and so on.
In peace and quiet seclusion of the countryside, a village community evolved a culture of its own out of the steady flow of its life and of the nature around it. The craftsmen's position in the predominantly agricultural society was pivotal, for it made the village society self-contained, a characteristic of India through long ages. The artisan was an important factor in the Indian society and culture. By performing valued and fruitful social functions for the community, he earned for himself a certain status and responsible position in the society. It was against this background with hereditary groups of every type of artisans arose, organised within rigid systems and protected by rigid laws which ensured a high standard and continuity of these crafts. Indian handicrafts have, thus, been in a class by themselves.

But the change in this sphere was witnessed as the Britishers took over the administration of the country. When the British rule was firmly established in India, with the gradual introduction of finished industrial products of England, the self-contained village economy of India was affected very much. Downfall of the village crafts started since then both from the economic viewpoint as well as in standard. The pace in deterioration of the cottage and village industries has been accelerated after independence with the rapid industrialisation of the country. Inspite of the fact, the elaborate arrangements made by the Government (both the central and the state) so far for revitalization of the village crafts indicate that these rural industries are still prevalent in different parts of the country and popular among the rural folk, particularly among the simple poorer sections.

For the promotion of these handicrafts, the household industries had so long occupied in the nation's economic life, in the first five year plan, six boards (The Khadi & Village Industries Board; All India Handicrafts Board; All India Handloom Board; Central
Silk Board; Coir Board and Small Industries Board) were establi-
ished by the Government of India. Again to carry out the com-
prehensive survey on the condition of the existing crafts made
under the village and cottage industries, in the Registrar
General's Office (under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of
India) there is a special unit under the name "Handicrafts and
Social Studies." The result of surveys made by this Unit
so far published clearly indicate how rich their heritage is
even today and to what extent they are practised utilising the
local natural products and meeting the demand of the local peo-
plo inspite of facing severe competition from the industrial
goods and receiving no real patronage from any quarter for
over a period of hundred years or so. Though not in large scale
as was the practice in ancient and medieval times, many of the
traditional crafts in diminished volume with distinct regional
characteristic features as has been revealed by the publica-
tions brought out by the survey unit of the Registrar General's
Office, are still practised in different parts of the country.

In view of the elaborate and permanent arrangements made
on behalf of the Government by setting up different handicraft
boards and survey units and also the result derived out of those
surveys made by them clearly indicate that there is enough scope
for making ethnographic study in this aspect of Indian folk
culture even today.

* List of publications brought out by the Handicrafts and Social
Studies Unit of the Registrar General's Office on the basis of
extensive field work done by competent persons:

1. Handicrafts in Maharashtra - Clay Images of Pan, Census of

2. Handicrafts in Maharashtra - Himroo - works of Aurangabad,

3. Handicrafts in Maharashtra - KOSA SILK at Ganeshpur, Census


Elements of folk culture related to day to day life

'Culture' stands for the sum total of human behaviour — verbal and non-verbal and its products — material and non-material. In this sense, when the culture is taken to mean the way of life, it is obvious that within this whole, there are agrofacts (products of cultivation), artifacts (products of industry), sociifacts (social organization), mentifacts (language, religion, art) and so on. Each one of these facts is again composed of numerous components. Among these components which are smallest, isolable but irreducible are referred to as cultural elements. It is through these component elements, culture is manifested. Therefore, by studying a few selected cultural elements, it is possible to trace out the nature of a particular aspect of culture of a region. The individual cultural elements like dress, ornaments etc., have been studied by the scholars of the other branches of knowledge from their economic/technological/aesthetic point of view. But to use them to plot out the culture zone as well as to study the unity and diversity of the pattern of culture in a geographical area has so far only been attempted by the anthropologists.

To plot out the culture zones in India, recently the Anthropological Survey of India carried out a survey. The outcome of the survey made, is a publication, "Peasant Life in India — A Study in Indian Unity and Diversity". In this study material traits of Indian rural population such as forms of villages, types of cottages, staple diet, oils and oil-presses, ploughs and husking implements, men's dress, women's dress, foot-wear, bullock carts etc., have been taken into consideration. On the basis of their forms and functions, the distribution of each item has been plotted on the map which has facilitated in drawing up a comprehensive picture of culture zones in India showing the core as well as the overlapping areas. The unity and diversity of Indian cultures which have been revealed by this study also clearly indicates that
there is much scope for carrying out the study of the elements of folk culture from the point of culture area and age area in India.

TRIBAL CULTURE

Introduction

According to 1961 census, there are 31,94,31,269 tribal population in India constituting 7% of the total population of the country. Perhaps except Africa, the largest concentration of such people anywhere in the world is in this country. Earliest human skeletal remains found in different excavated sites in India like Sialkot, Bayana, Raigir, Nal, Makran, Mohenjo-daro, Chanhu-Daro, Dharmarajika, Brahmagiri, Yelleswaram, Piklihal, Nevasa, Harappa, Addantanallur, Waski, Lothal, Ujjain etc., in association with different prehistoric remains made the scholars to infer that the tribals constituted earliest ethnological sector of the population. S.S. Sarkar even has considered a section (Proto-Australoid) of the tribals as authocthons. Being the oldest ethnological sector of the population, the term 'Adivasi' for the Indian tribals, has become fairly popular in the country.

Ethnology of Indian Tribals

Ethnology of the Indian tribals is really interesting. In their physical features, the tribal populations exhibit distinct and a conspicuous racial elements as pointed out by Haddon, Risley, Hutton, Guha and many others. So far as the distribution of this vast magnitude of tribal population is concerned, it may be mentioned that both B.S. Guha and D.N. Majumdar divided India into three broad tribal zones such as (i) North-Northeastern zone; (ii) Central zone and (iii) Southern zone. According to Guha, the Northern and North-eastern zone lies approximately between 31°7' and 35°0' N at its western end.

23°30'N and 28°0'N on its eastern end and between 77°33'E and 97°0'E with common border with Tibet, China. Burma is almost exclusively inhabited by the tribes having mongolid racial characters. The central zone extends approximately between latitudes 20°0'N and 25°0'N and longitudes 73°0' and 90°0'E is populated almost exclusively by the tribes belonging to the Proto-Australoid tribal groups. The southern zone lies approximately between latitudes 8°0'N and 20°0'N and longitudes 75°0'E and 85°0'E. It is also exclusively inhabited by the Proto-Australoid tribal groups with suspected Negrito racial elements. But the true negrito racial group inhabit only in the Andaman Islands. But close to Andaman Islands, there are Nicobar Islands which are inhabited by the Nicobarese with distinct mongolid characters. Besides this distinct distribution of racial elements found among the Indian tribes, there are certain controversial problems as well. The glorious example is the 'Todas' of Nilgiri Hill. Their definite racial characters and route of migration to this area are still problems to be solved.

Prehistoric cultures in India

Cultural relics of prehistoric India are very rich and varied in nature. It exhibits all the three distinct phases of lithic culture as well as the metal ages. The relics of lithic culture have not only been found in one or two places of almost all over India. In addition to surface finds, palaeolithic artifacts have been found in stratified beds predominantly in Northern India (Saan valley of Punjab), Western India (Gujrat), Central India (Narmada Valley), Southern India (Madras) and Eastern India (Mayurbhanj). Extensive study of these cultural horizons was made by both the Indian and the foreign prehistorians. Conspicuous among them are De Terra, Patterson, Zeuner, V.D.Krishnaswamy, Sankalia, D.Sen and many others. Not only in distribution but also the very nature of the complex pattern of Indian lithic culture as exhibited in Northern
Indian Flake Tool Tradition and Southern Indian Core Tool Tradition has placed India in a significant position in the prehistoric map of the world.

Indian Mesolithic industries also occupy a significant position in Indian prehistory. Microliths in India have been found almost all over India. In certain places particularly in Tinavally (Madras, South India) and Langnaj (Gujrat, Western India) they have been found in datable context corresponding to the post-glacial microlithic phase of Europe. Geology of these areas (with sand dunes and interdunes) also corresponds to the geology of the European sites. All these facts go to show that like Europe and Africa, India definitely passed through the microlithic phase of lithic culture of prehistoric period.

India has passed through the megalithic phase of culture as well. The remains of this culture have not only been found scatteredly only in one or two places but all over India except the Gangetic aluvial plain with their main concentration in peninsular India. Discovery of iron implements, coins, and fragmental skeletal remains in many megalithic monuments of South India and the multiple varieties of these monuments so far as their structural forms are concerned have offered considerable scope to study the prehistoric culture of this period and the physical anthropology of the then contemporary people.

India also witnessed the chalcolithic cultural phase. It is that phase of culture which indicates the advent of metal age when copper and bronze using communities retained a substantial though subordinate stone equipments. The best examples of Indian chalcolithic sites not only in the Indian context but the world as a whole are Mohenjādaro and Harappa. Besides these two major urban centres of the then contemporary period, this culture zone had wider distribution covering entire north-western India.
(Baluchistan, Punjab, Sind - all now in Pakistan) and extending up to the shore of the Gulf of Cambay.

Availability of all these cultural relics of prehistoric period with wider distribution and the extent of research now being made on them undoubtedly prove that India has passed through all the major phases of prehistoric cultures, the world has ever witnessed and is, therefore, a very rich field of prehistoric study and research.

Contemporary Indian tribal culture

For centuries, the Indian tribals had to lead a secluded life. Rigidity of the caste-bound Hindu society stood as a major obstacle in their mobility movement throughout the Hindu and the Muslim rule in India. British policy of isolation towards the tribals did not at all mark any improvement; rather it paved the way for their exploitation by the non-tribals. Only after independence in 1947, attention has been paid to the amelioration of the condition of the Indian tribal population. As a result, the Indian tribals exhibit many of their socio-cultural traditions even today.

Pointing out the characteristics of the tribal and following the demographic and social structural features, Sinha (I) has written that "It is isolated in ecology, demography, economy, politics and other social relations - from other ethnic groups. This isolation generates, and in its turn, is bolstered by a strong in-group sentiments. Internally, the group is characterized by homogeneity on account of lack of social stratification and role specialization other than by age, sex and kinship."

But the stagnation was lifted considerably after independence (1947) when the national leaders provided constitutional

safeguards and implemented various welfare measures for the upliftment of the tribal population of the country. As a result, the Indian tribals are now progressing steadily in different fronts. As the discussion here is being made in relation to the ethnographical museum, the picture of the tribal culture in India has been considered from the material aspect of their culture. Material culture is directly related to the economic condition and the extent of acculturation of the people concerned. As a result, in dealing with tribal material culture from the ethnographical museum point of view, discussion here has been confined only to two broader aspects i.e. (i) tribal economy and (ii) tribal acculturation in India.

Tribal economy

The economic condition at present in tribal India presents a unique picture in the world context. Here all the major categories of primitive economy are still in vogue. Purely hunting, fishing and gathering—the most primitive form of tribal economy is in existence in its purest form among the Onges, Jaoowac, Sentanelese of Andaman Islands. Besides this, a good portion of Indian tribes are dependent upon forests. Most of the tribes in India inhabit forested regions—particularly those of them who have the good gathering type of economy. The Kaday (Cochin), the Malepantaram (Trivancore), the Paliyan (Madura) and the Paniyan (Wynad) are examples of this type. Cultivation of crop is very rare and if practised at all, it is shifting cultivation. There are tribes in India who have an economy midway between the food-gathering and the primitive agricultural types. The Baigas and the Reddis of Daison Hill belong to this type. Further, there is the bulk of tribal population in India depending upon some form of agriculture with forest produce as a secondary support in such cases where forests are within reach. The tribes of North-eastern India belong mostly to this category and so do many middle Indian tribes. Horticulture and domestication of animals...
are the basic economic pattern of the Niquparese. Pastoral economy is practised by the Todas, Bhotiyas and a few other tribal groups. Besides these traditional economic patterns, in certain parts of the country, mainly in Bihar, W. Bengal and Assam, tribals have adopted modern industrial economy specially in the industrial belts as well as in the tea gardens.

Acculturation and the Indian tribals

In their cultural life as well, the Indian tribes exhibit distinct gradations. From the point of acculturation, Elwin(1) about a decade ago has classified Indian tribes into four categories, viz., those who are the most primitive, live a joint communal life and cultivate with axes; those who though equally attached to their solitude and ancient traditions, are more individualistic, less occupied with axe-cultivation, more used to outside life and generally less simple and honest than the first category; those, the most numerous, probably 20 million, who under external influence are already on the way to the loss of their tribal culture, religion and social organization; and finally, he has listed tribes like the Bhils and the Nagas who are said to be the representatives of the old aristocracy of the country, who retain much of their original tribal life and who, he regards, have won the battle of culture contact.

A similar classification but worded differently has been suggested by D.N. Majumdar. He has mentioned two types of tribal culture viz., assimilated and adaptive. The latter type of transitional culture is sub-divided into commensalic, symbiotic and acculturative types. Commensalism stands for common economic pursuits with neighbours; symbiosis indicates interdependence and acculturation indicates a one way traffic of culture traits.

A tribal welfare committee appointed by the Indian conference of Social Work (1952) to assess the progress made by the Indian tribals suggested the following classification from the point of extent of their acculturation:

i) Tribal Communities.
ii) Semi-tribal Communities.
iii) Acculturated Tribal Communities.
iv) Totally Assimilated Tribal Communities.

Considering the economic condition as well as the cultural level of the tribals from the point of acculturation, India occupies a significant position in the contemporary world of anthropological field. Because, in India even to-day, there are different tribal groups practicing all the different stages of primitive economy right from the purely food gathering economy to the highly sophisticated industrial one. In their cultural level also, they exhibit all the stages of acculturation in between the two extreme polarities i.e. purely traditional culture and totally assimilated culture. In view of these conditions prevailing at present in the Indian tribal world particularly in their socio-economic life, there is enough scope of making ethnographic study in India. That is why, many foreign scholars specially from U.S.A and U.K. are now working in the Indian field for furthering the cause of this discipline.

Considering the scope of carrying out ethnographic research in India both on tribal as well as on folk cultures, it is quite evident that the ethnographical museums in India have enough scope in presenting the ethnographic aspect of culture in the Indian context. It is one of the objectives of this thesis is to trace out how far all these elements have been accommodated and presented in the Indian museums, so far.
Introduction

India is predominantly an agricultural and rural country. Village constitutes its basic unit. According to 1961 census, there are 5,62,878 villages in this subcontinent, 52% of the population live in villages at present.

From time immemorial the village was a basic and important unit in the sphere of Indian economy as well as in the organization of Indian social polity based on caste system and Hindu productive organization. H.K. Bose has written "The economic organization in India in ancient times was built up more or less round the needs of the small, self-contained, local, regional unit, namely the village. Each village or region which might be formed of several villages had its complement of farmers, servants, artisans, teachers and astrologers and nobody poached upon the preserves of another". In medieval period during the Muslim rule, except in urban areas the position did not change much. Discussing Mughal times O'Malley says "Except for the collection of land revenue there was little state control of the villages. The activities of the state did not go further than the primary functions of defence against external enemies, the prevention of internal rebellion and the maintenance of law and order." 2

In the initial phase of the British rule, this system was continued. But in due course to introduce British capital in India, huge quantity of various categories of factory made products were gradually imported which dealt a death blow at the base of local economy. In this respect N.K. Bose’s writing may be quoted. "The first effect of the spread of imported industrial goods was that various artisan and trading castes lost their hereditary occupation; the demand for their wares began to shrink appreciably. The unemployed of various castes therefore flock to farm labour which seems to be the only occupation open to all without social objection."

As a result of intrusion of foreign goods in Indian market age old economic structure of the country started shattering. The worst victims of the circumstances were mostly the scheduled castes and artisan communities. They were deprived of the advantages of economic safeguard which was given to them in the traditional economic system. They even failed to take the advantage of English education. As a result they could not seize the opportunity of new avenues of employments. On the contrary the people of the higher castes taking full advantages of both education and employment consolidated their economic position. Whereas the scheduled castes and other backward communities became landless agricultural labourers by selling land to meet their requirement of cash money.

With the introduction of industrial economy new class system was also introduced in the country. Thus at the end of the British

rule in India in 1947, the Indian social structure was very complicated not only from the existing caste system but from the newly introduced class system as well with marked economic and sociological disparity among the various sections of the Indian population. Another section of Indian population, the tribal people (approximately 30 million) who had been leading so long a more or less secluded life almost cut off from the main stream of Indian civilization were also the victims of the British policy. The policy followed by the British Government instead of improving their condition in any way paved the way for them to be exploited by different agencies. Such disparity between the various sections of the people of the country restricted the spread of education to such an extent that in 1947, the percentage of literacy in India was only 17%. The British Government was then following a policy of divide and rule to cut the sting of the Indian independence movement. They fomented the communal sentiment to achieve their end. As a result India in 1947 was divided on communal basis into India and Pakistan and the communal tension was rampant all over the country.

Under this socio-economic and political condition in 1947 India became independent. The national leaders of the country in the newly formulated constitution declared this country a welfare republic. To build up this country as a really welfare state the national leaders among other aspects, primarily emphasised on certain basic requirements such as (i) national integration; (ii) economic upliftment; (iii) spread of education; (iv) allround development of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes of people etc., as without them under the existing condition of India it is not possible to build up really a strong prosperous nation and also a welfare state in the real sense of the term.

Under the circumstances how the ethnographic museums may be successfully utilised in the nation-building activities has been discussed here with the help of a few examples.
India is a vast country with different environmental settings and socio-economic patterns and is inhabited by a large variety of people. They belong to different religious faiths, speak different languages, have distinct regional culture patterns of their own, thus forming heterogeneous religious and cultural groups. Apart from the modern Indian population of such heterogeneous groups, there are approximately 30 million tribal population of divergent ethnic and cultural groups who for historical and ecological reasons had kept themselves away from the main currents of the national life until recently.

To build up a well-integrated strong prosperous Indian nation with multifarious racial and cultural groups, the Indian national leaders have put maximum emphasis on national integration. Because, it is only through integration the growth of a free democratic nationalism is feasible. Within the diversities of the various traditions, there are frequently many uniformities of values and symbolical meanings. In the interest of national integration these uniformities require to be adequately and appropriately interpreted to the different sections of the people. Because with its multiplicity of cultures, the democratic structure of society cannot be built up without knowledge and respect for the various traditions prevailing among the different sections of the people.

The ethnocentric character of human being can best be dispelled through museum by making him understand the significance of cultural elements of other people. Because it is in the museum with the three dimensional cultural relics, the cultural life of different categories of people like tribal, folk, urban etc., and various regional culture patterns can best be depicted in a compact space within the four walls of the museum. By making systematic display with modern audio-visual aids, the
significance of culture in the life of each category of people, reasons for their unity and diversity of forms can best be explained. Thus the ethnographical museum is in a position to enhance the knowledge of its visitors about the cultural life of the country. This knowledge will help to develop a sense of respect and tolerance for other groups which is so vitally necessary in India to-day in view of many burning problems such as communalism, regionalism, linguistic fanaticism and ethnocentrism the country is facing at present.

2. Ethnographic museum in presenting the basic cultural pattern.

India is a country with diverse racial elements. So diverse these racial elements are that the anthropologists often mention it as the molting pot of races. At the same time, diverse types of culture are also found among these multi-racial elements. But the most significant feature of these diversified cultures is that there is a common link which combine them together. To explain the nature of unity and diversity of Indian cultures, N.K. Bose by studying a few material traits of folk culture all over the country has compared the Indian culture as a whole with that of a pyramid. That is, when viewed from above, unity is exhibited. But when viewed from close range, diversity becomes apparent.

Ethnographic museum is a repository of cultural artifacts. With the help of the proper display of the different cultural artifacts, there is scope of organizing exhibition in the gallery. The exhibition of the cultural artifacts on its part offers the scope of interpreting this underlying significance of the

---

Indian cultures. Without having knowledge on this aspect one will fail to understand and appreciate the core of Indian culture. Therefore, to make the people understand the Indian cultural profile, the ethnographic museum has a great role to play.

Ethnographic museum and nation building activities:

In the ethnographic museum, cultural artifacts both of ordinary day to day life and of extraordinary occasions are accommodated to present the culture as a whole. At the same time, both major and minor cultural variations, both in time and space are also made to represent. By presenting the culture in true perspective, the ethnographic museum offers the scope of dispelling all sorts of shyness people may have about their own culture. Again from the presentation of cultural artifacts both in time and space, the people may know how they lived and how far they have progressed so far. From this they may come to know the difficulties confronted by them in making progress. The ethnographical museum by presenting the cultural history of the country may be in a position to infuse courage among people to overcome those difficulties. In a country like India when progressive march has been started to build up a strong prosperous nation, infusion of courage in the minds of the people is most essential to surmount all the difficulties confronted by them in their onward march towards prosperity.

4. Impact of economic development of the country and the museum

For the allround development of the country immediately after independence both in the spheres of agriculture and industry, various plans and projects have been undertaken. As a result, rapid industrialization is taking place leading to urbanization, improved communication and change in economic pattern of the country. For the upliftment of the tribals also, in all spheres of their life many provisions and safeguards have been provided
in the Indian constitution. Various schemes have been undertaken to improve their condition in the spheres of economy, education and also in sociological and cultural aspects.

As a result of these constitutional safeguards together with rapid industrialization, organization and improved communication in the country as a whole under five year plans, social mobility, acculturation etc., in the tribal culture have already been set in. Culture change both in tribal and folk life has further been accentuated by economic upliftment and change in traditional economic pattern. The rate of such changes is so rapid at present that to record them, there is only one proposition left— "arrest it now or never". Thus under the impact of modern economic upliftment of the country when its rich traditional cultural heritage is on the verge of extinction, the ethnographical museum may play a dominant role in collecting different categories of objects of both traditional tribal and folk cultures together with all sorts of information in their minute details. Because, it is one of the primary responsibilities of the ethnographical museums in general, is to act as repository for preserving the records of the rich cultural heritage of the country for the posterity, particularly in a developing country like India where both traditional folk and tribal cultures have most glorious history of their own for centuries.

5. Utilization of ethnographical museum to evaluate the culture change as an impact of welfare measures adopted so far for the tribals.

Museum is the repository of the relics of human culture. It is through cultural relics, the culture pattern may conveniently be studied. Specimens collected in different phases of time indicate the culture pattern in time sequence. Study of culture in time sequence offers the scope of examining the extent of culture change.
In view of the existing condition of the tribal and folk cultures of India the ethnographical collections of the Indian museums in the pre-independence era, may serve as a baseline data for making effective study to the extent of change made so far in the cultural spheres of tribal and folk life.

This sort of study on the evaluation of culture change through the study of material objects is very important in India at present because due to implementation of various welfare measures, economic pattern as well as its position has been changed considerably. Improved communication and direct negotiation with the concentrated tribal belts have been established. Commercial goods have also been made available to them. Steps have been taken for spread of education as well. The changes in all these spheres of life are reflected in the material objects used by the people concerned. Therefore, the study of material culture offers the scope of unveiling the extent of culture change.

Museum is by far one of the practical institutions to study the material culture. The study of culture change through material culture is most effective in India at present. Because, this sort of study of culture change will help much in assessing the extent of benefit derived out of welfare measures adopted so far. Thus the museum by offering the scope of assessing the impact of welfare measures in the life of the tribals through the study of its collection, may contribute much in the application of applied anthropology in the Indian field as well.

6. Utilisation of museum in arresting the degenerating trend as well as revitalising the fading traits of tribal culture in India at present.

In India competition of commercial goods, impact of modern civilization, missionary influence, gradual disappearance of
ancient norms of economic, ceremonial and religious life and introduction of more efficient tools and new elements of designs through different welfare and government agencies and non-availability of certain categories of raw materials, have made the traditional tribal art to degenerate to an appreciable extent.

For arresting this degenerating trend at present attempts are being made through different design centres, handicraft boards etc., to introduce new sanctions and interest for primitive art by welding together commercial standards of craftsmanship, effective business methods, elements of designs and traditional motifs of techniques. The success of these new sanctions and interest for primitive art depends upon the knowledge of teachers and experts on the tribal art and their enthusiasm and skill in this respect. To enhance their knowledge on tribal art in its different aspects, the teachers and experts of the training centres may successfully utilize the art collections of the ethnographic museums. Thus by supplying various designs and informative materials of tribal art, ethnographic museums in India may play a significant role in upholding the degenerating trend of the Indian tribal art.

There is another significance of exhibiting work of tribal art in the museums, namely the revitalization of such art, specially in zones with tribal concentration. This will offer the tribal people a chance to see their own best products treated with honour and exhibited for the admiration of visitors. This will encourage them to produce more and raise the standard of what they make. With this view in mind, as in each of the six districts of NEFA an ethnographic museum has been set up.

**Educational role of the ethnographical museums**

(i) For General mass

Museum is no longer simply a repository of the relics of human culture. In the 20th century with its valuable collection
this institution is now being utilised as a centre of visual education. To make it popular to the visiting public, through various audio-visual materials the museum display is now being made very attractive, educative and informative, Therefore, the museum at present serves as a centre of education to all categories of people of different age groups irrespective of whether they are literate or not.

In India at present museum may play a significant role in imparting visual education. Because even to-day a very large section (60%) of Indian population is illiterate. For raising the percentage of literacy, emphasis has been given on adult education as well. Visual education has also been included under the adult education programme. Among other visual aids, modern audio-visual display of museum exhibits has been proved very effective to impart visual education to all categories of people with special reference to the non-literate.

Under the existing condition of the country the ethnographical museum may most successfully be utilised to impart effective knowledge about the rich cultural heritage and complex pattern of culture of the country to its vast magnitude of non-literate and semi-literate population and also even to the literate people who are not quite aware of the facts as the present situation demands. Besides the cultural aspect, ethnographical museum has the scope of presenting many other interesting topics relating to human being such as the cultural life of the prehistoric people which has much popular appeal to common mass in general.

(ii) For students

After independence along with social and economic upliftment much emphasis has been given on education as well. To give spur in the movement for the spread of education many new subjects have been recently introduced in curriculum of educational institutions in different levels. Anthropology is one of
of such new entrants in the Indian academic field. As a social
studies it is now being taught in schools. In the under-graduate
level, it is taught both in honours and pass courses directly
under the name 'Anthropology'. In the post-graduate level also—
this subject has now been introduced in as many as 17 univer-
sities in comparison to only one (Calcutta University) in pre-
independence era.

For the study of anthropological branch of knowledge, the
anthropological museum has been proved to be an inseparable
adjunct. It is through the museum specimens, knowledge is imparted
to the students of prehistoric archaeology, physical anthropology
and cultural anthropology. The students have the opportunity of
carrying out practical work as per curriculum with the help of
specimens of the museum. The anthropological museum offers the
scholars adequate opportunity to carry out research work as well.
Hence in the Indian academic field, the value of anthropological
museum particularly to the student community is immense at present.

From the educational point of view, mass communication
is another very important function the museum may play very
effectively in India. For example, in India there are various
groups of people living in different geographical areas who
lead totally divergent ways of life. This variation ranges from
primitive food gatherers and hunters to the highly sophisticated
urban dwellers. How many Indian really know these divergent forms
of cultural life? Again the Indian culture is often depicted
as an integrated pattern of culture in which all the varying
forms of cultural life fit like pieces in a mosaic. But for an
average Indian, it is difficult to visualize such a picture.
It is only through proper display of various regional groups
in anthropology museums and through film shows etc., that we
can bring about the elements of unity in an apparently divergent
cultural milieu. Hence the ethnographical museum by following
functional approach and arranging the exhibits around certain
themes and organising exhibitions, popular lectures, group demonstrations, film shows etc., may play the most effective role in communicating the basic elements of Indian civilization to the millions and millions of people of the country. Describing the role of museum in educating public by communication Molly Harrison (Curator, Geffrye Museum, London) has written "The communication of interest, of information, of values is the essence of education; thus, for good or ill, museums cannot avoid education."

3. Ethnographic museum as a centre of research

The collection of ethnographic specimens for preservation in museums is an essential part of the provision of basic documentation on human cultures at specific points in time and space, quite comparable to the recording, in written form, of data on the nonmaterial aspects of these cultures. Future research - descriptive, comparative and historical - will be based on museum specimens as well as on published and manuscript materials in libraries and archives.

The material aspects of culture are normally more subject to change than are nonmaterial aspects. To preserve a record of the diversity of human technology, anthropology cannot wait for increase in interest in material culture; collecting must be done now, even though analysis and description may be considered at a later date. Thus with accumulation of required ethnographical specimens, the ethnographic museum may serve as a centre of research.

In India today with the rapid spread of industrialization and breakdown of economic isolation, manufactured goods are very rapidly displacing local handmade artifacts. But the anthropologists are not paying much interest in making study of the traditional cultural artifacts. To compensate this lapse on the

part of the anthropologists working in the Indian field, the ethnographic museums may come forward. By collecting the specimens of traditional cultures which lie within their scope, the ethnographic museums in India may develop themselves as the centres of research for the scholars interested in this field in future.

9. **Role of ethnographic museum in giving to understand the prehistoric past of the country.**

The whole field of archaeology depends on evidence from artifacts and human modifications of the environment. Most archaeological interpretations ultimately originate from ethnographic data on material culture. Museum collections of ethnographic objects are exceedingly important to enable archaeologists to identify the upper ends of their excavated sequences with historic cultures as well as to provide evidence on the functions, uses, construction and perishable components of the usually fragmentary objects recovered from archaeological excavations. Thus, the maintenance of a vital link between the fields of anthropology is another function of museum's ethnographic collections.

In this sphere also, the Indian ethnographic museums may play a significant role as the country has really a very rich cultural relics of prehistoric past followed by the protohistoric and medieval periods.

Discussion made above reveals that museum is one of the potent sources for carrying out successfully many of the nation building activities by the call of time. It is through the museum, mass communication for national integration is possible to establish. As a centre of visual education it has definite role to play in imparting education to all categories of people of
the country regardless of age or typo or intellectual capacity. It is again the practical institution to act as repository of fast changing material traits of tribal culture for the posterity. As a research centre, it has much scope to carry on research on the socio-economic and techno-cultural aspects of tribal culture for utilising result in applied aspect with special reference to the formulation of plans for tribal welfare as well as for evaluation of culture change of the tribals due to impact of various welfare measures already undertaken.

One of the main objectives of this dissertation is to critically analyse the structural features as well as functional potentiality of the ethnographical museums of the country in for examining how far they are structurally equipped and functionally operative to carry out successfully all those nation building activities under the present condition of the country.