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CONCLUSION

The idea of Indian Museums as vehicle of museum education would be fulfilled only if it is always associated with educational programmes organized by the museums. Formal education in schools, colleges and universities would serve the purpose partially without having a lasting impression on the minds of the students, whereas museums impart informal education which has a lasting impression through display of their original objects collected and hence, museums are supplementary to formal educational institutions.

In the following pages suggestions are put forward for considering museums as vehicle of museum education.

Museums impart education to all the people, from aged persons to children, from cultured and refined ladies to housewives, from the rich to the poor, from unlettered persons to inquisitive learned men – urban or rural. To carry out this august duty, museums undertake different kinds of activities, e.g., exhibitions, outreach programmes, loan kit service, special programmes for physically handicapped persons, arranging guided tours, lecture series on science and arts, etc., which have already been dealt with. Museums are the trustees of our heritage. They have the unique opportunity of preserving the objects of the past and present, which are utilized as tools for enhancing knowledge. Formal educational institutions usually do not have objects and here lies the importance of museums. Museums are places of edutainment (education and entertainment) leading to intellectual stimulation. Due to having inbuilt power of educating the people, museums have turned into a cardinal and essential part of the society.

Since 1814, when the Indian Museum, the first public museum of India, was established in Kolkata, almost two hundred years have rolled by and within
this long span of time the number of enlisted museums of different disciplines have gone up to about six hundred\(^{39}\). If the growth of more museums can be considered as the criterion for expansion of informal museum education, the poor number of museums in India from the backdrop of her vast population is really startling and distressing. In European countries and in the U.S.A. there are much more museums than in India from the viewpoint of their population. This research paper aims at the importance of museums in the field of education of the general masses, scholars, students, etc. To disseminate education by museums, the following steps are humbly suggested:

More museums are to be set up all over India, especially in rural areas so that people inhabiting there can get an opportunity of having knowledge about India’s glorious past, development of science and technology, etc., and a pragmatic picture of India. Although some museums have been established through public and private entrepreneurs, it is essential that more museums are to be established. Our Governments may take the leading part for this purpose, since, finance is a vital factor. Governments can inspire the big industrial houses, philanthropic organizations, etc., to set up more museums. In fact, a network of museums throughout the country should be developed as Soviet Russia did and this is eloquently mentioned by Rabindranath Tagore in his “Letters from Russia”. However, the opening of the museum at Cellular Jail at Port Blair in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can be considered as the watershed in the history of Indian museums. It is difficult to get an equivalent of this museum all over the globe, where the saga of undaunted gallantry of the human spirit involved in the Indian freedom movement has been so sincerely and sympathetically depicted that the museum itself has turned into an epitome of the sacrifices made by the brave Indian patriots in their struggle to throw away the shackles of the British rule. No degree of punishment, not even the fear of gallows could cast a shadow of

disquietude over the relentless freedom fighters.

A unique museum, viz. the Parliament Museum has been established in New Delhi whose display technique is considered as a novel one by visitors. The opening of the National Philatelic Museum, New Delhi and establishment of a Cricket Museum at Pune are examples of the plausible desire of the Indians to open more museums. But these cannot be considered enough for a vast country like India.

Organizations, like 'Friends of Museums' may be formed through the length and breadth of the country. At the initial stage, some persons, who are really interested in museums will form 'Friends of Museums' and they will inspire others of the locality and beyond by organizing lectures on different topics, like history, anthropology, geology, astronomy, archaeology, sculpture and architecture, etc. Gradually, when the number of attendance will mount, often speakers from schools, colleges and other educational institutions are to be invited for lecture. Slowly the number of audience will swell and they will feel the necessity to set up a museum in their locality for preservation and conservation of historical and other objects for imparting knowledge. Devastating impact of global warming and the necessity of preservation of the local flora and fauna can also be highlighted which will attract the immediate attention of the people at large. All types of museums are for the same purpose, i.e., making no profit, but serving the people. People should be made conscious about these two objectives of museums and undoubtedly the personnel of existing museums have a cardinal role to play in this respect. In village areas assistance of gram panchayats should be taken because they are the bridge of connection with the rural people and they have the capacity to influence public opinion in village areas. At the outset, panchayats should be convinced about the benefit of setting up museums in their areas and they would be included within the 'Friends of Museums' to be formed, so that their personal involvement is assured. Their inclusion will directly inspire the local people to actively take part in the concerned programmes, which would
be very useful in winning over the mind of the village folks and convincing them about the utility of museums in their localities. Enthusiastic persons of the ‘Friends of Museums’ and staff of museums may take initiative in this respect.

In modern age it is incumbent upon the museums to cultivate goodwill of the people of the community in which they are located. As such, maintaining excellent and intimate public relation is a *sine qua non* for modern museums. ‘Museum Clubs’ may be formed with the members of the community, who are interested in local artists, craftsmen, historians, students and other persons. It should be borne in mind that those who are not interested in museum activities should be made interested by the sweet behaviour and convincing ability of the museum men. ‘Museum Clubs’ can also play a significant role in forging a cultural bond among the people of the locality by generating a cultural and artistic atmosphere.

‘Museum Clubs’ in association with and co-operation of museums may organize lectures by competent scholars on different topics of art, crafts and sciences. Functions may be organized in museum’s own hall on dance, drama, mime etc. to widen the spectators’ knowledge.

Entertainment and education is the main goal of modern museums and there is no denying the fact that museums exist for this purpose. Museums serve not only the adults but also children. Children like freedom and self – expression to create something. Clubs can be formed in museums on art and crafts, zoology, botany, geology and other topics for generating a feeling of love for nature and human endeavours. Children of the Club should be made aware of the danger of global warming and its impact on endangered birds, animals and trees. Science museums can undertake activities for Club Children on science topics, such as electricity, solar energy, etc. and can prepare models on them.

Members of these clubs will meet on a particular day to exchange their experiences before other members with regard to their individual projects, invite
specialists to give their opinions and advice. These activities will broaden their outlook. Members may be provided with identity cards to enter the museum free of charge to give them encouragement.

Not only children but adults also may be allowed to become members of the Clubs who will chalk out the programmes/activities in consultation with the museum personnel.

Unless there is adequate fund with a museum, it cannot function properly and to the satisfaction of the people for whom a museum exists. With this end in view, clubs may invite wealthy persons to be its members for large monetary contributions to run its various activities successfully.

Retired and experienced persons of the community may be invited to render free service to museums if they desire so. It is expected that many of them will feel rather happy to share their whole life's experience with the museum and spend their idle time for some useful purpose for the community. These persons may be given a bit of training if required so that they are accustomed to the museum works.

It is considered as an essential duty of the museums to welcome the visitors cordially and to render amenities and comforts. If any visitor does not get proper facilities inside the museum, there is every possibility of a feeling of antipathy in his mind and he would not repeat his visit to the museum in future. Two factors should be combined to make a visitor's visit successful:

(1) Arranging a meaningful exhibition

(2) Proper interpretation.

Thematic symmetrical display and interactive exhibits are proven to be more fruitful to communicate museum education to the common people.
It should always be kept in mind that the museum not only educates, but also entertains visitors as guests.

Illiterate visitors from distant rural areas feel shy of asking any question even of minor nature. Cobwebs of their shyness should be blown away by endearing behaviour of the receptionist in the counter.

Information counter of a museum should be entrusted with a well-versed personnel, who can supply all necessary information about the museum's activities to intended visitors and he would make the visitors feel comfortable. It should be borne in mind that illiterate visitors from distant rural areas feel shy to ask any question even of a minor nature. Cobwebs of their shyness should be blown away by the endearing behaviour of the receptionist in the counter.

It may not be possible for small museums to maintain a museum shop where museum publications, photographs, fabricated miniature objects, etc., are displayed for selling as done by big museums. The purchasers keep these at home as mementos. Even their relatives and friends feel encouraged to visit the museum observing these articles.

If museums have a Children's Room for their programmes children will certainly develop a kind of love towards museum visit.

In auditorium seminars, lectures, dramas, songs, etc., are arranged, which promote exchange of ideas among the audience and create an interest about the museums.

In India, of late, divisive forces have been raising their ugly heads often in some parts of the country. Museums can take an effective role in this regard. Museums established in those disturbed areas by highlighting the cultural heritage may inspire the local people with the idea to unite and to form a powerful India. People may be convinced through exhibitions, T.V., radio programmes, lectures by local leaders and panchayats, various entertainment performances including
dramas and songs to unfold the culture of the local people. Museums may convey lessons that united we stand, divided we fall and that they are also part and parcel of an India with a glorious past and a bright future.

Indian museums need to follow in the footsteps of the developed countries in using modern equipments and techniques in exhibitions. Commentaries through guide phones may be used to depict the related stories of objects of the museum. Similarly, animation technique is used mainly to clarify the various ecological concepts, such as bio-geochemical cycles, photosynthesis, soil erosion, etc. In the natural history galleries arrangement may be made for running of 8 mm. video films by using photophone equipments. T. V. and Plasma T. V. have also been examined to be very effective in the exhibition galleries to follow the objects displayed therein. These programmes provide multisensory experience, which stimulates active response to the museum visitors. Computer programmes, games and graphics may also be used to get the concept of the theme of the exhibits across to the visitor. Such exhibits provide both fun and education. The Bio-science Computer Room of the National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi has a series of computers for interactive and participatory experience about the functions of DNA, the process of photosynthesis, working of eye, muscles, skeleton systems, etc. Both adult and children visitors prefer this system and are fascinated.

Toilet, smoking corner, cheap canteen, drinking water, telephone booth, etc., are aids to visitors. If these facilities are not available in a museum visitors will be averse to pay a second visit.

India is a developing country with maximum people living in village areas. Most of them are economically poor. For this reason museum visit has not yet become popular among them. As the village people cannot come usually to museums, museums go to them by arranging travelling exhibitions, which is considered as an ideal way of interaction with them. Museo-buses ply to village
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areas. Thus museums can share their responsibility of educating the people. Common people feel dismayed by large exhibitions. So, it is necessary to present selected specimens in a didactic and synoptic way to impart education to the common people of rural areas.

The National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi has a discovery room as an educational device. Discovery room provides for a direct hands-on experience for children who get an opportunity to explore and become familiar with varieties of objects in a congenial atmosphere.

A school loan kit generally contains copies of original objects, charts, colour plates and information sheet. These kits can be loaned out to schools for using by students and have educational value.

In a museum it is necessary to make an arrangement of ramp and lift for physically challenged visitors.

For deaf and dumb and blind visitors special programmes are to be made. For the blind: visitors object labels may be made on braille method to get an idea by touching. It is to be remembered that such visitors need a sympathetic reception from the museum people.

It is also observed that the participation of the poor visitors is declining as the entry fees are high and as they are unable to bear these expenses. So, minimum fees are suggested.

Museums may invite teachers, students from schools, colleges and universities as visitors to substantiate their knowledge from books with real objects. School teachers may also be trained through different courses arranged by museums who will mount exhibitions, as far as possible, conforming to the school curricula.
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It is also noticed that almost all the museum viewers agree that museums have a great role to play in dissemination of education among the people and they would be able to see original objects which they cannot find elsewhere. About the free entrance into museums the rural visitors en bloc supported that proposal. So far as science museums are concerned children have shown their marked preference for drawing, interactive push-button, touch and feel objects. The visitors have suggested better arrangements for physically handicapped persons. Strong suggestion has been made for more travelling exhibitions in rural areas.

In India, the need of the hour is co-ordination between the museums and educational institutions. The standard of all round development of a country can be gauged by the standard of education and this can be achieved by way of utilizing museum services. Museums can play a vital role for advancement of education in informal way. Indian museums possess cultural treasures, through which they can promote educational activities among the people and as well can impregnate an immense feeling about national integration.