CHAPTER THREE

MODES OF COLLECTION

Collection of antiquities and objects of art constitute one of the main functions of every museum. In fact, all the objects both for display and for reserve collection are acquired through various processes. In case of the site museums under the Archaeological Survey of India, all processes are observed in making collection for these museums. Following are the ways and means by which the Survey in the past built up the collection of the site museums and these are still being followed today. These are (1) Excavation (2) Exploration (3) Purchase (4) Gift or Donation (5) Loan or Borrowing (6) Treasure Trove and (7) Exchange.

(1) Excavation:

Excavation is the primary mode of acquisition of antiquities for the site museums of the Survey. In fact, series of excavations conducted at many historical sites like Sanchi, Nalanda, Bodhgaya, Nagarjunakonda, Sarnath, Koniapur, Amaravati, etc. etc. by the Archaeological Survey in the past gave the main impetus for the establishment of the site museums. Most of these sites yielded a rich harvest of antiquities which laid the very foundation of the site museums at the above sites. Sanchi was left deserted and neglected from the 13th century onwards. In the year 1818 General Tylor
brought it to the public notice for the first time. Captain Johnston, Captain F.O. House and subsequently Alexander Cunningham excavated many stupas in the neighbouring area and collected a very large mass of antiquities. Later on, the Survey under the guidance of John Marshall carried on large scale excavations resulting in the discovery of valuable antiquities which enriched the Museum at Sanchi. Similarly, Sarnath was excavated sporadically by many hands including Alexander Cunningham before its systematic excavation by the Archaeological Survey between 1924 and 1928 under the direction of Sir John Marshall revealing a town of Stupas, Viharas and temples, rich in antiquities. The excavation by Marshall at the famous Nalanda site led to the growth of the Nalanda Museum. The ruins at Nalanda were excavated as early as 1927 to 1931 by Mr. Longhurst and again by Sri T.N. Ramanathan in 1938. In recent times, the area was systematically excavated by the Survey. This has resulted in further recovery of antiquities from the site that enriched the present museum of Nalanda. The excavations at Rajgir from 1905-06 onwards by the Survey under Marshall contributed to the growth of the Nalanda Museum collection. Excavations at Nalanda from 1916 onwards, in fact, enriched the Nalanda Museum collection. Vaisali, identified with modern village of Basarh (District Musafarapur) in Bihar, was excavated earlier in 1903-04 and 1913-14 by Mr. T. Block and Mr. D.H. Spooner respectively of the Survey. In 1929, the site was again excavated on a larger scale by the Survey under a scheme of the Vaisali Sangha.
Further excavations between 1957 and 1961 carried out by the K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, also contributed much towards the growth of the present Vaishali Museum. The site of Kondapur was excavated in 1940 by the State Archaeological Department of the former Hyderabad State. A museum was started at this place with the rich collection of excavated antiquities recovered by the State Archaeological Department of the Hyderabad State. Later on in 1955, this museum was taken up by the Archaeological Survey of India and present museum at Kondapur started. The site of Amaravati in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh is sacred to the Buddhists for a long time for her stupa. The site was earlier noticed by Mr. Colonel Colin Mackenzie as early as 1797. Subsequently, attempts were made by Sir Walter Smith (1845), Robert Sewell (1877), James Burvitt (1881) and Alexander Ross (1888-89) to excavate the site. The excavations by the above persons yielded architectural pieces and sculptural objects. The recent operation during 1958-59 and onwards under other officers of the Survey brought to light more interesting relics that lead to the growth of present site museum at Amaravati.

Besides systematic excavations, accidental digging for altogether different purposes lead to many interesting finds. As for example, a fine image of Agni was discovered at Sarnath in 1955 in course of foundation digging in the premises of the Chinese temple and removed to the museum. At Nalanda, while field was cleared for archaeological gardening a few years back, some sculptures were excavated from the surface and sent to the museum.
In order to increase the collection of the site museums and to make exhibits representative of the sites concerned, following points should be noted:

(i) Objects recovered within the periphery of the site museum representing the site concerned should be acquired by the site museum.

(ii) Representative objects should be strictly local ones. For example, objects of Sarnath, Palanda, Nagarjunakonda should be kept at the respective museums only.

(iii) Under no circumstances, antiquities recovered by excavation either by the Survey or by research institution or university should be allowed to be kept elsewhere. The excavated materials should necessarily be kept at the site museum concerned. Only duplicates may be sent elsewhere on exchange basis. This policy should be in keeping with the ideals for which the site museums stand.

(2) Exploration:

Collection of antiquity by exploration specially from the surrounding areas consists of another source of acquisition of antiquities for the site museums. Many objects in the past were collected from various sites like Sarnath, Palanda, Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, Hampi, Sanchi, Khajuraho and others and deposited in the respective museums. These, in fact, enriched the collections of
these museums. Still today, explorations carried out in neighbouring areas have been most important source of acquisition of antiquities for the site museums of the Survey. A large number of interesting sculptures, architectural fragments found scattered all over the ruins of Hampi were collected by exploration in the year 1954-55. These, in fact, laid the very foundation of the Hampi Museum. An extensive exploration in the ruins of Hampi in 1958 yielded two hundred sculptural and architectural objects, out of which about a hundred were removed to the Hampi museum. The ruins of Hampi almost regularly yield antiquities. There is further scope for collection of antiquities from the temples and other monuments at Hampi. The matter has been taken up with the trustees of the temple authorities. A Vishnu image of the Gupta period and the head of an image of Siva of the tenth century A.D. were discovered by exploration in 1954 and added to the collection of the Sanchi museum. In 1956, about fifty-four sculptures and many beautiful architectural fragments were recovered by exploration from the neighbourhood of Khajuraho temple-site and added to the museum collection later on. Intensive exploration in Konadiapur site between 1957 and 1966 lead to the discovery of rich antiquities like microliths, neoliths and coins of the Satavahana period. In the year 1967-68, a silver relic-casket with beads and other usual contents was discovered from the back of one of the stupa-slabs in the Archaeological museum, Amaravati, while the slab was being cleared for display purposes. In 1968-69, a typical stone image of the Hoysala style, found in the debris of
the ruined Nagaresvara temple, was taken for the Halebid museum.

3. **Purchase**:

Collection of objects by purchase often forms an important feature of the site museums like other museums in India and abroad. One of the important roles of the Curator is to select objects whose authenticity and inherent value seem to him such as to make them useful addition to the collection covered by the museum's programme. The primary duty of the Curator in this respect consists of studying and identifying the object. He must discuss the price with the party and secure the necessary monetary sanction from the Superintendent. When it is within the sanctioning power of the Superintendent, he can give the permission. But when the price exceeds the limit of the Superintendent's sanctioning power, the matter is referred to the higher authority. Among the many examples of acquiring objects by purchase, a few may be mentioned. At Fort St. George, ten colour prints showing the places of historical importance in South India and several rare models were purchased from a gentleman of Ootacamund in 1957. Sometime in 1956, a valuable collection of Indo-European coins including some rare types was purchased from Sri T.T. Srinivasachari for the Fort St. George Museum, Madras. A valuable collection of Indo-European coins including some rare types was purchased again for the same museum. The acquisitions in 1959-60 for this museum included coins, postage stamps, porcelains and records of the Indo-British period of which
two treaties, respectively between the Governor of Madras and the Raja of Tanjore and between the East India Company and the Nawab of the Carnatic were of special attraction. A few years back, the museum at Hampi purchased from the Government Museum, Madras, a valuable coin collection consisting of gold and copper coins of the Vijayanagara empire. The museum at Khajuraho in the year of 1962-63 purchased twelve fragmentary pieces of railings from Bharatpur, District Satna, and eighteen sculpture from Sakkur, District Junna, Madhya Pradesh, besides twelve more pieces of sculptures. In 1962-63, a French engraving of Tipu Sultan was purchased for the Varanarpatna museum. Again in the following year, collection by purchase included an iron cannon of Tipu Sultan's time, a pamphlet entitled "The struggle of Tipu Sultan against the British Colonial Power" with its Russian equivalent and twenty-four impressions of Persian inscriptions of Tipu Sultan. In 1964-65, five hundred copper coins of different denominations belonging to Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, three historical pictures of Tipu Sultan and two muskets of that time were purchased. The museum at Amaravati in 1967-68 purchased from a villager four architectural pieces. The villager accidentally came across the finds while working in the field. The museum at Nalband in 1968-69, purchased ten beautiful wood-carvings and a few sculptures of the Hoysala period from Belur. Similarly, museums like Bijapur, Badaerga, Nagarjunakonda and Kondapur purchased various antiquities like sculptures, coins and ornaments from local dealers in the past.
There are a few important things to be considered when antiquities need to be purchased by the site museums. The points may be stated as follows:—

(i) Objects to be purchased for any site museum must be of local importance. In other words, objects should be historically related to the site concerned. Otherwise, they are of little value.

(ii) No time should be spared in finalizing the question of purchase from the dealers who usually approach the Curators. Generally, there are many hurdles which need to be overcome while negotiating a purchase. As a matter of fact in case of delay dealers may go elsewhere to sell their objects. So necessary monetary sanction from the Superintendent or still higher authority should be secured as early as possible lest the object goes to other hand.

(iii) The Superintending Archaeologist for museums should be given adequate financial power to purchase for the museum any collection of great significance as seemed fit for the site museum under his control. This would prevent the collection from going to private collectors' hand specially to foreigners. This is important in order to check the smuggling of Indian art objects in the foreign markets.
The site museum Curators should encourage the public, specially the people in villages to collect antiquities for the museums. They can even declare award or give money in cash as a token of reward to successful collector or discoverer. This method might yield satisfactory results and enrich the museum collection.

Gift or Donation:

Gift or donation is another source of acquiring objects for the site museums. Sometimes, people offer objects of historical value to the museum as an act of generosity. On some occasions, the donor likes to impose some conditions for the gift. The conditions specified while making a gift usually consist of the following:

(i) that the objects donated or bequeathed must be displayed whenever possible in the gallery;

(ii) that the entire collection donated must be displayed as an integrated whole.

The obligation to exhibit any object permanently in any gallery runs against the modern museum concept, as displays are likely to be changed as occasion arises. Next, reserve collections are not meant to be store-room objects for ever; on the other hand, they are likely to be shown before the public as occasion arises. Besides, the objects in the store-room facilitate study and reference to the visiting scholars and students.
Further, compulsory "entire display" of objects go against the modern museum ethics. The very idea of "entire display" goes against systematic and coherent arrangement of exhibits. The modern museums do not entertain any such agreement or condition while objects are received as gift for the museums. Sometimes, museums refuse the offers if impractical conditions are imposed. Objects which are unsuitable, incoherent, either as being of inferior quality or because they are inconsistent with the total scheme of development must be refused.

Among the many examples of gift to the site museums a few deserve particular mention. As early as 1952, the museum at Srirangapatna received as gift from the Public Library, Bangalore, two prints, one showing Lord Cornwallis receiving the hostage princes and other showing Serigapatnam of A.D. 1799. In the year 1953, the Fort St. George received as gift from Shri Shri Prakash, the then Governor of Madras some interesting relics for the Museum. These include beautiful English porcelain, numbering about twenty-four pieces, manufactured at Canton and in England between 1770 and 1830, specially for the East India Company with their Coat of Arms and motto. In the same year, the museum further received two hundred pieces of arms from the Central Ordnance Depot of Allahabad, the Senior Prince of Tanjore and the Raja of Venguli. In the year 1954-55, Fort St. George again received as gift from Shri Shri Prakash eleven oil-paintings, four colour-prints and two flower-
vases. Further with the gift of a dozen oil paintings from the
former Government House, Ootacamund by the Governor of Madras, the portrait gallery in the Fort St. George had been opened. Two large size oil paintings relevant to the scope of the museum were received as gift from the Pastrapatni Bhavan, New Delhi. Almost similarly, the museum further enriched her collection with two hundred coins, medals, porcelain-ware etc. besides, twenty eight ceremonial dresses of the British Regiment from the Ministry of Defence, Government of India. The Tipu Sultan Museum at Srirangapatna received two prints, one showing Srirangapatna and the other Tipu Sultan's son as hostages from the Public Library, Bangalore. The Archaeological Museum at Goa has acquired sometime in 1965 some sixty-three architectural pieces and eight sculptures from Dr. (Miss) Gritali, a scholar who was carrying research in India at that time. It is a matter of great pleasure that the Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay gave to the Fort St. George Museum some relics pertaining to the scope and collection of the latter some years ago. This gesture shows how the big museum can help sister institutions in enriching her collection.

(5) **Loan or Borrowing**:

This is another useful method of acquiring museum object. Loan strengthens collection of museum considerably. Loan may be of two kinds (i) Long term or Permanent, and (ii) Short term or temporary. The idea of a loan or borrowing is essential when we take into consideration the conditions of small museums which generally have a limited scope of collection. Further, the practice is encouraging and useful as it results in filling up any cultural gap in a collection and thereby facilitates research.
Loan of objects for the site museums should always be encouraged. Unfortunately this has not been practiced much among the museums of our country. Due to red tapeism, very often prolonged delay occurs in holding negotiations between museums for obtaining loans. Among the examples of long term loan a few deserve mention. Some coins were received by the Tipu Sultan Museum from the Directorate of Archaeology, Mysore few years back. The Government Museum Madras gave coins and medals to Fort St. George Museum as loan. Similarly the Bangalore State Museum gave some Indo-European coins to the Fort St. George museum at Madras.

(6) Treasure-trove:

A large number of objects of archaeological importance come to the museums as treasure-trove finds. The acquisition of these objects by the museum is governed by the provision of the Indian Treasure Trove Act of 1878. According to this Act, whenever any treasure exceeding value of rupees ten is found by any one, he should report the find to the Collector and deposit the treasure in the nearest Treasury or give the District authorities a suitable security. If the Collector finds that the treasure was hidden one hundred years before the date of its discovery, he may declare it ownerless and divide the treasure or its value between the owner of the place and the finder of the treasure in the ratio of twenty-five and seventy-five per cent, unless an agreement to the contrary exists between the two parties; if the owner of the place does not
present himself to claim the treasure, the whole of it may be given to the finder. The Collector may also, instead of dividing the treasure decide to acquire it on behalf of the Government by paying the parties the value of the material of the treasure together with one-fifth of that value. Concealment of finding of treasure or any damage of such treasure is punishable under law. The provisions of this Act are thus quite upto-date, for they prescribe "Compulsory declaration" and acquisition against compensation. The operation of this Act has enabled the Government to acquire ancient sculptures, hoards of coins, etc, which have gone to enrich museums.

There are some examples of acquiring objects for the museums by this Act. A few years ago, the site museum of Hampi acquired a good collection of coins. Fort St. George museum also enriched her collection on a few occasions through this Act.

(7) Exchange:

Last but not the least important mode of collection to enrich a museum is exchange. The scope for getting objects by exchange in the site museums is however very limited. There are not many examples in its favour. One may be mentioned here. Some relics belonging to Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan were brought from the Fort St. George, Madras to the Tipu Sultan Museum, Srirangapatna. Again, eight antiquities, such as arms and coins, falling within the scope of the Tipu Sultan Museum were transferred from the Fort St. George to the former. The scope of exchanging antiquities and art objects
between the site museums should always be encouraged. Objects falling within the scope of a particular site museum should necessarily be sent to that museum. This would obviously widen the scope of site museum collection and at the same time provide specialization to the individual collection.