

Development Of Government Museum In Chennai – A Study

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Abstract

This study explores the development of the Government Museum in Chennai since its establishment in 1851. It analyzes the museum's growth, architectural changes, and challenges, including funding constraints and technological integration. Comparative studies with other museums provide insights into global best practices. The research investigates the museum's role in promoting cultural heritage, education, and tourism, evaluating outreach programs and digital adaptation. Interviews with stakeholders contribute diverse perspectives, informing recommendations for the sustainable development of the museum. The study aims to enlighten policymakers and administrators about the museum's significance, encouraging its dynamic evolution as a cultural hub.

Keywords: Museum , Chennai history , Development of Museum

INTRODUCTION

Museums must continue to emphasise the development and care of collections that offer tangible proof of the culture and environment of their chosen territory, which may be a single historic or archaeological site, a city, a region, or an entire country. These collections must remain true to the Museum's traditional values. The modern museum, however, also needs to place a significant emphasis on pursuing quality in its service to its diverse publics, whether these are elementary school pupils, college students, regular local visitors, tourists from abroad or within the country, or specialised scholars.

Together with the preservation, study, and display of museum objects, education is one of the main tasks of museums. The need for focused, validated, and

understandable information is greater than ever in society today due to the constant growth of information flow. Universities, scientific and research institutions, as well as museums, which have been compiling information on human culture for ages, are all important sources of this kind of data.¹ It is important to trace the origin and development of Madras Museum because of its several interesting features and its importance as a part of heritage of this great city of tradition and culture. It has been an interesting experience for the writers of this paper to visit the Museum several times and speak to curators and other experts on the Museum. The visits have certainly enabled them to acquire new and interesting knowledge of this great institution. More importantly, it has made us proud citizens of the city.²

MEANING OF MUSEUM

The Greek word mouse ion, which meaning the home of the muses, is the source of the English word museum. A temple of muses is suggested by the name Museum. According to Greek mythology, Zeus, the Greek Jupiter, was the father of the muses. At the base of Mount Olympus, the peak of the gods, they were born in Peira. There were nine of them who were regarded as the deities that oversaw the arts and sciences. An establishment is a museum. The history of man is presented in a museum. It tells the story of how humanity has endured throughout time in its environment. It contains both natural and artificial creations. In contemporary society, it contains the nation's cultural spirit.³

HISTORY OF CHENNAI

Chennai's original form was a collection of villages situated amid paddy fields and surrounded by palm trees. The city has been influenced by the popular south Indian dynasties of the Cholas, Pandas, and Vijaynagar Empire. The British East India Company's Francis Day and Andrew Cogan were given permission to establish a factory trading-post in 1639, and this was the beginning of the metropolitan city. The British constructed Fort St. George a year later, and this fort served as the centre of the expanding colonial city. The Tamil Nadu Assembly was housed in Fort St. George until the new secretariat building opened in 2010.⁴

GOVERNMENT MUSEUM IN CHENNAI

Chennai Museum is second oldest Museum in India next only to the Museum in Kolkata. It is also one of the biggest Museums in India. Of course it is the oldest Museum in Tamil Nadu madras Museum is one of the well established and well maintained Museums. It is a governmental organization like most of them in India. Madras Museum has branches in several places in the state. All these features make the madras one of the most interesting Museums in India. Actually the madras Museum had a humble. It was started in 1851 with only a few geological specimens, which were donated to the government by the literary society in 1846. These specimens were exhibited in the public hall of fort. St. George College.⁵

This Museum was organized during the year 1851, with about 1, 100 geological objects with Surgeon **E.G. Balfour (1851-59) as the first officer-in-charge** in the college of fort St. George at college Road, Nungambakkam. Museum was thrown open to the public on **April 29, 1851**. Members of European community as well as Indian donors like Rajas of Cochin and Travancore, the Nawab of Carnatic and several south Indian Zamindars, added to its collections. The Government Museum continued its useful work during 1953-54, the year under review. As in the previous years, two batches of teachers underwent intensive training in the Museum technique for a fortnight during May and June 1953. One hundred sets of metal casts of 32 coins representing various periods of Indian History, together with an illustrated descriptive catalogue for the purpose of identifying and studying the coins, were prepared and supplied during the year, to one hundred schools recommended by the Director of Public Instruction so that the sets might serve as a useful teaching aid in the study of the history of India.

It was only in 1853 that these were moved to their present premises, on pantheon road. There is an interesting historical link between the name of the road on which the Museum is situated and it's old building. The old building of the Museum was called the pantheon. Pantheon was popularly known as 'public rooms' or 'Assembly rooms' historians do not agree to the exact date of established of the public rooms.⁶ The government Museum, Chennai was established in the year **1851**, with 1100 geological object it is the oldest and the second largest Museums in India.⁷ It is located 16.25 acres of land in the heart of the city. This Museum has now developed into a multidisciplinary Museum with various sections like

Archaeology, Anthropology, Numismatics Art Botany, Zoology, Geology, and Children's Museum. It also includes Education, Design and Display section and Chemical conservation section as supporting branches and it has 47 galleries housed in 6 buildings.

There was a spurt in the reorganization and development of the Museum in 1963 with generous financial assistance from the government of Madras resulting in the now Bronze Gallery, a now Natural History wing and an extension of the Chemical Conservation Laboratory. A Gallery was opened in 1966. A Numismatics Gallery was set up in 1976. In 1984 January, contemporary Art Gallery was opened and in 1988, April, the Children's Museum was inaugurated.⁸

DEVELOPMENT OF CHENNAI MUSEUM

Museums should play a vital role not only in collecting and preserving the art and culture of a particular region or community, but also in presenting the social and cultural development of mankind, by exhibiting the original evidence of man's creative genius. His control over nature. Therefore, in the modern context the Museum ceases to be a private interest and becomes a public property owned by a culture or community and the people of that or community can derive benefits from it.

The museums must have the goal to play a lively role in displaying the social and cultural progress of mankind by showcasing authentic examples of man's creative brilliance and his mastery of nature, in addition to collecting and preserving the art and culture of a certain region or community. Hence, in the modern setting, the museum stops being a personal passion and transforms into a public asset that a culture or community owns as a whole and from which its members may benefit.

Museology is the study of museums in general, including their background, core beliefs, varied founding and development models, operating procedures, social considerations, and regulations. Regrettably, the study of museums has always been fraught with difficulties. According to the setting and conceptual context in which it exists, museology is defined. Each nation has a different concept of it based on its own goals.

It also takes into account how museums affect nearby communities. In this sense, museology includes both empirical and theoretical research. It is an overarching idea that addresses cultural preservation, research, communication, and the integration of museums into various models of sustainable development. The phrases "museology," "museum science," and "museum studies".⁹

An everlasting non-profit organisation that collects, preserves, conducts research, shares, and displays actual evidence of how people relate to their surroundings for the benefit of society and its growth is open to the public. To effectively establish cultural consciousness and awareness among people, these initiatives relied on money, transportation, and communication technologies, as well as human labour, and as these fields developed, so did the pace and scope of that growth. In addition to new studies conducted by museum authorities that were made aware to the public and students, the museum published helpful books with a variety of academic, educational, and cultural goals in mind. As a result, museums successfully impart cultural history education while also meeting India's demands and realities. Hence, museums serve.

MUSEUM PERFORMS THREE MAIN FUNCTIONS

- I. Acquisition and documentation of materials,
- II. Exhibition and care of materials,
- III. Providing different educational services, such as conducting guided tours and arranging popular lectures to benefit the student community as well the scholarly world.

ACTIVITIES IN A MUSEUM

The Museum profession is too introspective, and members should be encouraged to travel and broaden their knowledge of visitor requirements. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation. It is important above all to provoke and not to bore. The concept of entertainment while educating (edutainment) is an important one for Museums.¹⁰

EXHIBITIONS

Museum collects materials of this day by various means and gives a panoramic view of the art, culture, industry, flora and fauna, mineral wealth etc., of the region for which they stand

while preserving them for posterity. Museums are institutions where some kinds of programmes are conducted regularly. Their programmes are of educational value both to the students, public and the tourists. The tourist flow varies from season to season and place to place depending upon the accessibility.

CULTURAL PROGRAMMERS

A cultural programme in a Museum is a regular feature in the European Museums. In India Museums too, now a days, the cultural activities are increased day by day. An expert in the field demonstrates many performing arts in the museums.

PUBLICATIONS

Publication is one of the important tools to increase the number of visitors to a Museum. Proper Museum publications make many foreign visitors to see the Museums in countries where they tour. The posters, handbills, newsletters, magazines, scholarly publications really advertise about the Museums to those who are interested to see other countries.

INTERACTION BETWEEN MUSEUMS AND TOUR OPERATORS:

At present there are only a limited interaction between the tour operators, tourism department and the Museums department. This relationship should be increased. There should be a close contact between these organizations all the time. The Museums must have a training programme to the guides in the field on the recent trends in the Museum, the new additions, workshops, seminars, and lectures in the issue of making the Museum to the fullest utility of the tourists.

AUDIO AND VIDEO CASSETTES

The departments of Museums have got plans to prepare some audio and video cassettes on some special subject in the Museum and made available to the tourist operators can screen them to the tourists while they are taken to the sites. The tourists may also purchase them and take home which will arouse interest in those who have not visited the Museum's in Tamil Nadu in the future when seen.¹¹

CONFERENCE

International conferences are conducted in Museums and other organizations. These international conferences bring

many tourists in the name of participants. Such conferences organize pre and post conference tours, sightseeing tours etc., many workshops, camps have been conducted by some Museums and galleries. Always the department of Museums interacts with the tourism department and distributes the free brochures got from the tourism department to the delegates. The third trend now widely spoken in museum circles is the role of computerization and the application of hi-tech devices in museums. With the help of these new technological devices three of the five basic works of the museums, the display, education and conservation could be done more successful.

MUSEUM AND THE DIGITAL FUTURE

For museums, the digital perspective is attractive. A growing number of museums are starting to set up "Virtual exhibitions" employing cutting-edge technology. Cultural treasures are being brought into the classroom by museum educators for use by instructors and students. Information about the world's cultural heritage is becoming available for scholarly use. The response from the people has been tremendous. More people visit some museums online than in person, with an estimated 1 billion people worldwide visiting virtual museums.

DISABLED CORNER

A touch screen is installed with information about the archaeological Fort Museum's antiquities and other exhibits. This kiosk benefits the visitors unable to reach upper floors especially the differently abled visitors. An audio guide is also installed speaks about the significant features of colonial settlement and the museum exhibits is one of the attractions placed in the kiosk. The audio guide is developed in trilingual i.e. Tamil, Hindi & English. The audio guides alongside the Braille brochure are sensed by the visually challenged visitors.

DIGITAL FORMAT OF DOCUMENTS DISPLAYED WITH TOUCH SCREEN

The Museum is enriched with two archival registers with recordkeeping of baptism, marriages and funerals ceremonies endured under the first Anglican Church at the then madras presidency. The earliest of entries in the record dates back to 1680. The physical original registers are displayed along with the digital format integrated in touch screen display. A visitor

can relish the augmented documents and view the archival records as per their interest.

OUTREACH PROGRAM ME WITH AUDIO-VISUAL SHOW

Under the outreach programme the video shows of world heritage monuments of India under archaeological survey of India are being organized in various schools/college. This feature is available at the temporary exhibition hall on request to any school on their visit to the Museum. Information Technology like use of computer, fax and e-mail with internet facility was introduced in 1999 making a quantum leap in technology. The web site of the museum (2001) is one of the three best in the world of museums and won praise from the president of India himself who browsed it for two hours prior to his visit to the museum. All technical staff including curators now know how to use the software meant for pictures, how to make and display pictures of the artifacts and even CAD to a certain extent so that they are attractive on the computer screen. It is interesting to know that no outside agency developed the Web site.

DEVELOPING AND MANAGING MUSEUM EDUCATION

What are museums used for? What is the goal of all these efforts to collect, restore, and exhibit objects? It is definitely more than just occupational therapy for field researchers or curators. However, it goes beyond simply being proud to represent a country's or the world's shared cultural history. In truth, this is being done to help the museum's knowledge and background, as well as to allow visitors to engage in knowledge and cultural activities. Thus, it is crucial that the Museum's every action is geared towards the benefit of the public and their education. As a part of the unofficial sector of education, museums bring unique value to the formal school and college education systems. They expand the scope of formal education and All museum professionals, whatever their particular job or specialization, need to have a strong belief in the need to share with persons of all ages or social levels as possible knowledge of the importance of discovering and understanding the roots of mankind and their creation of culture as the natural heritage of our planet.¹²

COMPETITIONS

Competitions are another important activity, which motivate students to learn more about the museum objects. The government museum, Chennai and its district museums in the state of Tamil Nadu are arranging many competitions throughout the year. Curators of different sections conduct quiz programmes for students. The students visit various section of the museum and keep abreast with the general information about the objects. Besides this, competitions on various crafts, paintings, oration, essay writing, photography are conducted to motivate the students to have more understanding and involvement in the subjects. Competitions on exhibitions of coins, stamp, etc., collected by them are also being arranged and given prizes to the best collections.¹³

CONCLUSION

In today's environment, it has become necessary and even imperative for museums to evaluate their objectives in order to better meet the demands of a globalizing society. Today's museums must act as catalysts for development and transformation. They must reflect societal developments. The Museums must develop into organizations that promote peace. The promotion of the nation's heritage must be led by museums. They must address social issues like drug abuse, prostitution, street children, and the public's lack of appreciation for their contributions to the preservation of the nation's cultural heritage. They must not be scared to speak out for the sake of the country through their exhibitions and programmes as an institution.

The basic functions of a museum like the collection, preservation and interpretation have been talked in the museology circle. The role of the museum in education and public relation are viewed in its broader sense now. Special exhibitions, travelling exhibitions, guided tours, school visits and loan services to schools, training courses to teacher, lectures through audio- visual aids and publications are the various means of museum education. The success of these educational programmes largely depends on the involvement of the participants and the organizers. When a museum conducts all these educational programmes and extracurricular activities, then that museum is a successful museum.

End Notes

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