

## The Complexity of Historical Museums: An Experimental Zone in the Context of Colonial, Post-colonial and Modern India

Ms. PRONITA MONDAL

PhD Candidate

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Kanpur

Dr. RITWIJ BHOWMIK

Associate Professor

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Kanpur

### Abstract

*A museum is a place that constructs a narrative. Especially it reconstructs the past as a narrative through recreated spaces and display of objects. The Museums are of a different kind, as there are different scholarly, pedagogical, and disciplinary objectives associated with each of them. Though every museum can be a historical museum, but among them, the historical museums of social, cultural, and political history is a category that relates to a relatively immediate past that almost conditions our present. Simultaneously it relates to our present that almost conditions our past and is a part of it. The ideas that a historical museum constructs can also be a way of comprehending the present. An attempt to understand and present the past sheds light on its present ideology, as one always looks at the past from the perspective of the present. Moreover, thought about the future also stays embedded within the display. From an authoritarian position, a museum communicates and attempts to educate its audience, the public, and people of future generations about the nation-state's perception of the past. Museum gives a concept of time. It recreates a time within a representational space. As if the present is a different time, detached from the past and vice versa. From being 'cabinet of curiosities,' museums have evolved into historical and cultural institutions with greater purpose and function over time. There are many theories and thoughts that are believed as relevant to the changing idea of the museum. Most of the earlier display is in*

*keeping with the concept of 'civilization' and later 'nationalism' of the nineteenth-century, but some of them are relevant no more. The concept of representation of the nation has also gone through considerable experimenting and discussion, resulting in a different kind of display of nationalism in a museum space. This article will discuss the conception of museums in India under the colonial framework - its location and philosophical meanings to the appropriation towards the imperial history of India and its alteration in meaning to set a national significance in post-colonial time. It also discusses nationalism, a further shift of ideas, and debates in the context of colonial, post-colonial, and modern India and tries to generate a central problem- how a museum display is the product of long-existing epistemologies in India and an experimental ground for modern government ideologies to visually represent a new nation-state.*

**Keywords:** Museum, Visual display, visual culture, colonial, post-colonial, modern, history, art-history, Indian art, civilization, nationalism.

## INTRODUCTION

Museums in a nation are important public sites and institutions. It is a place that constructs and presents a narrative about history, cultures and heritage through archiving, classifying and displaying objects and recreated spaces. In a designated government national museum, as Kristy K. Phillips says, the practice of inscribing history with complete freedom and authority happens. While every object displayed in a museum is legitimized by archiving and documenting its collection history, groups of objects holistically legitimize a museum narrative<sup>1</sup>. In a society, the Museums are of a different kind, which serves different purposes and functions to the public. They are different from each other as there were different scholarly, pedagogical, and disciplinary objectives associated with each of them at their establishment. The earliest museum can be founded in Alexandria in the third century BC. Then among many early

---

<sup>1</sup> See Kristy K. Phillips, *The National Museum of India: A Museum to and of the Nation*, Making National Museums, Limkopin University, 97.

established museums, there was John Tradescant's collection in England, which had later turned to Musaeum Tradescantianum in 1677, or Elias Ashmole's collection that was turned to Ashmolean Museum at Oxford in 1683, or the British Museum, which was founded in 1753. At the initial stage, museums were mostly housing with private collections of antiquities, artefacts by individuals, kings, nobles, and scholars, which were not open to public access. There were private and personal *Chitrasalas* or picture galleries in ancient India. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the public museum has acquired its modern form (Bennett, 1995, 19). In the complex process of the transformation of the museum, adaptation of aesthetical and theoretical improvisation from other institutions developed almost at the same time like the International exhibition, amusement Parks, circus, fair and the department stores, etc., have been discussed by Bennett. Initially, museums were received as or perceived as the 'cabinet of curiosities'<sup>2</sup>, the *ajibghar* and *jadughar*, which literally means the house of strange or mysterious things as it was considered a place that houses objects of interest from the past. Slowly the purpose of the museum evolved into something more, into a cultural institution.

A natural history museum usually has a grand display of different kinds of prehistoric and historical objects, archaeologically found objects of science and biodiversity and many more. It shows a grand narrative of human innovation, evolution, progress, and civilization. Sometimes the past is so distant in time that it is difficult to construct the imagination due to the inaccessibility of data. Though every museum can be a historical museum among these many categories of museums, this article deals with historical museums relating to the social, cultural, and political past of India. Historical museums related to social, cultural, and political history are a category that relates to a relatively immediate past that almost conditions our present. Simultaneously they relate to our present that almost conditions our past and is a part of it. Museum gives a concept of time. It recreates a time within a representational space. As if the present is a different time, detached from the past and vice versa. The idea of explaining and representing the past through its display of

---

<sup>2</sup> Cabinet of Curiosities is a strange assemblage of notable objects from the natural world and human-made objects in an exhibition. See Stephen E. Weil, *A cabinet of Curiosities*, 1995.

artefacts and recreated spaces is embedded in the historical museum concept.

The ideas they construct can also be a way of comprehending our present. An attempt to understand a past with the understanding of its tradition, heritage, society, and politics throws light on the present, as looking at the past will always happen from the perspective of the present. Partha Chatterjee argued, taking reference from Rajnarayan Basu's attempt to compare the past and present-day living in his book '*Ekal sekal*' (Those days and these days), that past is a subjectively constructed narrative. As based on the author's own biases, the past has been glorified extensively. Museum often carries the same biases with the display of objects. The display manifests a thought about the future. It communicates and attempts to educate the public and people of future generations about the perception of the past by the state.

Museums have undergone some distinct phases in the course of their development. The initial phase was a collection of important and sensory materials, storage, and preservation. This was the storehouse phase or archive. It includes information and objects as a property of the individual, the owner. The status of the king's throne, the private property of an individual king, became a historical object in the context of the Public museum later. In the second phase, interpretation, categorization, and display became a focus. It was for instruction, learning, and entertainment, for a few. It requires interaction, participation, and sharing among a larger section of people in a society for an institution.

Moreover, due to the lack of it in Indian society, the concept of the establishment of the public museum was not very important at that time. Though in India, religion was an institute and monuments, temples and stupas hold the collective memory of a larger section of people of that time. It was served as a treasure house reflecting the moral and social values of the time (Bhattacharya, 2006). In the second phase of the development of the museums in India, knowledge, and science became important. So objects are displayed following certain ideological principles and parameters. Often the parameter is the time, and so it followed a chronological order. In the third phase, the museum became a social and academic institution that had a pedagogical and educational purpose for the public.

Museum travelled a long way, parallel to the progress of the civilization of a nation to reach the present state in their holistic aspects. This transformation process of museums has been referred to as the “Museum Movement”<sup>3</sup>. India experienced the ‘museum movement’ from its journey from *Chitrasalas* to the growth of public museums in the modern sense. Museums has become a centre of learning since the British colonial era. The establishment of the Asiatic Society<sup>4</sup> in 1784 to its development towards the Indian Museum in 1814 was the landmark in the development of modern museums in India. Museum movement in India had started in Calcutta<sup>5</sup> in Eastern India, the capital of British India. After 1912, when the Capital city was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi, the museum movement continued and spread in the east as well as the northern part of India. Established by the British, the Indian museum in Eastern India served as a model for the museum movement in India (Bhattacharya, 2006).

Museums mostly showcase one piece of historical or cultural information. Most of the earlier display at the time of its inception is in keeping with the European concept of civilization as worked out in the nineteenth-century. The nineteenth-century museum concept has given importance to the field of popular education to create awareness about the cultural and natural heritage. The functions associated with the museum were instrumental for the overall development of humanity.

From being ‘cabinet of curiosities’, the evolution of museums into a greater purpose and function, a historical and cultural institution over time, many theories and thoughts are believed to be relevant to the changing idea of the museum. Most of the earlier displays in museums in India are in keeping with the concept of ‘civilization’ and later ‘nationalism’ of the nineteenth-century, but most of them are relevant no more. Like in the display at the Indian national museum, the narrative of a world created through objects

---

<sup>3</sup> See Bhattacharya, *Museum Movement in Eastern India: A historical Analysis*, 2006, PhD Thesis.

<sup>4</sup> Asiatic Society was an organization during the British Raj, founded by Sir William Jones in Calcutta in 1784. It was formed to enhance research into India and the surrounding regions.

<sup>5</sup> In 2001, the name of the city ‘Calcutta’ was officially renamed ‘Kolkata.’ For more detail, see “The West Bengal Capital City (change of Name) Act, 2001 West Bengal Act XVIII of 2001, Law department Legislative, Government of West Bengal.

was divided into distinct civilizations, historic eras<sup>6</sup> that have demarcated territories, a single dominant language, and distinct and differentiated religion, like the 'Gupta era', 'Harappa civilization,' 'Mauryan sculpture,' 'Sunga period' etc. According to the Indian historian Prof. Romila Thapar and many modern scholars, unlike the civilizations that were viewed as unique and having evolved in virtual isolation, it is essentially a result of many outside influences. There are studies that show the golden period of every civilization- when the highest achievements are seen, are generally times when they have much contact with other civilizations. There are considerable influences, borrowing, and experimenting resulting in new knowledge and skills.

A state museum serves as an authority towards presenting the past. So, it has been believed that it reflects the true progress of the civilization of a country. However, the museum is an experimental zone with complexities of time, politics, and the theories of the colonial, post-colonial, and modern era. It is consistently working to be represented as a symbol of a modern nation. It is also working on defining its public as national citizens with modern culture. Consequently, with the establishment of every new museum in a state, it generates a new meaning of the image of its civilization to the public space.

Display inside a museum is political. In the context of display in a museum, Prof. Thapar said,

“The selection (of an object) is inevitably linked, consciously or subconsciously, to the theory explaining the significance of that which is being presented.”

As an influential site, what has been represented can have a major impact on the portrayal of society to others. Similarly, what has been avoided or neglected in presentation inside a museum space is also a major part of understanding the representation. Today, the museum is considered as the authority that materially verifies the claims of history, anthropology, archaeology, sociology, art, craft, and studies of culture, heritage, and identity politics. So, it holds a critical responsibility towards the Identity of a nation.

---

<sup>6</sup> The historic era means when the official documents like inscriptions or something that can be considered records relating to an event important to politics and administration of the ruling class began to carry dates and some brief histories of the dynasty. See more on historic era here, Thapar, *Time as a metaphor of history: Early India*, Oxford University Press, 1996, 31-35.

This article will discuss the conception of museums in India under the colonial framework - its location and philosophical meanings to the appropriation towards the imperial history of India and its alteration in meaning to set a national significance in post-colonial time. It also discusses nationalism, a further shift of ideas, and debates in the context of colonial, post-colonial, and modern India and tries to generate a central problem- how a museum display is the product of long-existing epistemologies in India and an experimental ground for modern government ideologies to visually represent a new nation-state.

### **Civilization and Nationalism**

The term 'Civilization' became a critical word in the vocabulary in the context of Indian nationalism. The word 'civilization' had different meanings in different languages and contexts. The literal translation of the word in Sanskrit, Bengali, or most other Indian languages, which is *Sabhyata*, does not mean the same. Rabindranath Tagore, in his essay '*Sabhatar Sankat*' 'The crisis of civilization,' begins by saying we do not have a Bengali or Indian word for 'civilization.' The word has been brought by the European for which the meaning is kind of a civilizing mission which was the basis of the European colonial rule in the world outside of Europe. For them, there is a hierarchical scale of civilization, where they looked at India, China, Africa, and other colonies as savages. In many ethnographic writings and monographs by European scholars, like the series of volumes of 'The History of British India' by James Mill, India has been described as a fallen civilization. It was as if they were once civilized and now have decayed into bad taste. Westerners mostly believed in the idea of progress, and so they claimed India is an ancient civilization. Dipesh Chakravarty, in his keynote lecture at the University of Rhode Island in 2009, has argued that the claim 'India is an ancient Civilization' is a relatively recent claim of the nineteenth-century by the Europeans through their cultural encounter in India with the colonial power.

Furthermore, he explained how nationalist leaders of that time engaged the west with the word 'civilization,' and it became a common but critical word to engage with national sentiments and nationalism. Indian nationalists have borrowed that word from the Europeans but did not agree with the European meaning of the word.

They used it to communicate with their fellow intellectuals, criticize, and dialogue with the western perspective towards India. India got its independence from the British government in 1947, but the colonial world outlook that informed Indian nationalism was present till the nineteen sixties. Dipesh Chakravarty has marked the transition of the colonial to the post-colonial period with the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister, in 1964. According to him, India as an ancient civilization was something like a cultural habit till that period<sup>7</sup>.

During the latter years of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, he added that Europe was going through political and economic turmoil, and Europeans became critical about their firm belief of being superior. It was the time when big Indian political leaders and philosophers were emerging. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, who had made their great reach to the western intellectuals through the support of many, especially the marginalized class of the west, who were not so much the mainstream intellectuals. However, with their huge popularity and nationalist agenda, the sharing of dialogue became possible.

The word civilization became political. There are two opposite takes on 'civilization.' When the westerners used the word 'civilization' to Indians, they were considered in the state of being not civilized but savage. Nevertheless, when an Indian has used the same word to the westerners, they criticized them. For India, it became Indian criticism of the west. Indian intellectuals used the word 'civilization' to beat the west, but they were not always in agreement with the west and within themselves.

The two most important personalities in the context of Indian Nationalism, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rabindranath Tagore, were often in disagreement in understanding and describing civilization. In his book '*Hind Swaraj*' Gandhi wrote in 1909 about the model of self-rule for India. For him, to lead an endogenous life rejecting every idea, value, and product of west and industrial civilization is 'nationalism.' For him, civilization means the industrial civilization, which he called a disease. While for Rabindranath Tagore, it is more of a self-reflective process. For Tagore, a nation, a group, or a community can

---

<sup>7</sup> Chakrabarty Dipesh, *Indian Modernity once colonial, now global*, the University of Rhode Island, Sept. 29, Lecture.



be called civilized only when it can self-criticize, furnish from within itself, and empowers it is poor and oppressed.

Unlike Gandhi, it is the cultural formation that is not against the west, western idea, science, or industrial civilization. For Gandhi, the ideal of Indian civilization was the village, an ideal progressive village with libraries and universities, which is autonomous and self-contained. According to him, Indian civilization is a village-based civilization, though the disagreement of Jawaharlal Nehru is evident in some later published letters to each other in 1945. According to Nehru, the village is intellectually and culturally backward, and progress cannot be made from such a backward environment. The village culture needs appropriation towards the city culture. However, in spite of these many disagreements, while representing a nation and generating a national narrative, the idea of Gandhi was more accepted because of the sharp contrast it has with western ideology. Agreeing with Gandhi, the nationalists believed India is already civilized, as India has a prosperous, wealthy, and progressive history before the British invasion.

### **Museums in colonial India**

The oldest public museum in India was established in Kolkata, the Indian Museum along with one of India's oldest Art Colleges, Government School of Art<sup>8</sup>. It was established in 1814 by the Asiatic Society. Sir William Jones, a Supreme Court judge in Calcutta and a linguist, was the founder president of the Asiatic Society. Under the patronization of Warren Hastings, this society was inaugurated in 1784 at Calcutta to categorically study the cultural and historical heritage of India and disseminate it. The society members conducted scientific research and development work on different branches of Art, Archaeology, Science, and Natural history. It resulted in a huge collection of a wide variety of specimens and objects like ancient relics, coins, flora and fauna specimens, minerals, etc. All these specimens needed preservation. The idea of establishing a museum for study, interpretation, analysis, and later display of the objects was

---

<sup>8</sup> See more on the history of Indian Museum and the oldest Art Academy in eastern India, Government School of Art here, Bhowmik, Ritwij. "150 Years of Calcutta's Heritage Art-College: A Comprehensive Study of Its Present Declining Situation." *European Academic Research*, 2015.

gradually perceived under the suggestion from many. Among them, they were mostly botanist like Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, who undertook research on exotic species in the new found botanical garden<sup>9</sup>. This was leading to the foundation of the Indian Museum. The activities of the Asiatic Society and the foundation of the Indian Museum lead towards the development of the museum movement in Eastern India. This led to the growth and development of different types of museums in Eastern India.

Bhattacharya has written, the growth of scientific thoughts and technological practices<sup>10</sup> are the factors responsible for the museum Movements in India. He continued,

“The Indian Culture-area occupied a distinct place in the history of science during the ancient and medieval periods.”

So large sections of art and cultural objects of varied category are displayed in museums in India, as they were considered as the material source of a body of knowledge about a time. Since it has a classical colonial origin, it was dependent on the concept of the singularity of culture<sup>11</sup> and civilization since a long time. Here categorically classified objects displayed in glass cases and wooden cabinets were found appropriate for linear<sup>12</sup> categorical display.

The Government of India and State Governments enacted and enforced different laws and provided financial support to encourage the setting up of diverse types of museums in Eastern India. The establishment of some organizations like the Archaeological, Botanical, Zoological, Anthropological Surveys of India, and National Council of Science Museums flourished museum movement in India. Patna Museum was established in 1917 In Bihar and inaugurated in the year 1928. The archaeological department recovered a large number of objects during the excavations in 1911-1912 at

---

<sup>9</sup> See Bhattacharya, Sachindra Nath. *Museum Movement in Eastern India A Historical Analysis*. 2006, University of Kalyani, PhD Thesis.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> The singularity of culture can be understood as a moment when cultures are brought under a corporate framework, and knowledge about culture becomes some general information.

<sup>12</sup> Prof. Romila Thapar discussed that linear time gives a direction from the beginning to the end of time. It was viewed as characteristics of the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, which went from the first human, Adam and Eve, via the Jewish prophets to Christ and the Biblical chronology's final judgment day. From its association with religion and tradition, the secularisation of linear time in Europe had integrated the notion of change in time and the belief that Change was progressing as defined in nineteenth-century terms, based on archaeological, biological, and Geological research and discovery. See Thapar, *Time as a metaphor of history: Early India*, Oxford University Press, 1996, 4-9.

Muzaffarpur district of Bihar. All these objects became the primary collection to be housed at the Patna Museum. Many collectors and historians like Dr. Stella Kramrisch and Dr. K.P. Jayasawal contributed a lot to its collection and contributed their noble service (Bhattacharya, 2006). Then Nalanda Museum was founded in 1917 in Bihar, with the collected antiquities and archaeological remains from Nalanda. In 1919, the Diwan Bahadur Radhakrishna Jalan Museum was founded at Sher Shah's Fort in Patna, Bihar. In 1920, the Nandan Museum at Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal, was set up as an institution collection for the purpose of teaching-learning within the institute. Museums were becoming an integral part of urban city planning. In India, museums were established close to public libraries, great educational centers, historical sites, monuments, and religious places, so that glory of the site keeps embedded within the museum.

In the Indian Museum at Kolkata, there was an overwhelming presence of British members in the Board of Trustees, with the exception of a small number of Indian employees. The scholars and professionals specializing in the knowledge of the subject and sections represented were British. Though the subject represented is exclusively Indian, but the Indians members had hardly participated in the display process and taken any initiative toward innovation. So, it has always followed the guideline set by the British authority.

### **Indian National Museum and display of the Nation**

The National Museum of Art, Archaeology and Anthropology in New Delhi is one of the key museums of national level in India. In the domain of national museum in India, construction of a collective identity of nation has been attempted with a big collection and a broad epistemic category of 'art,' 'archaeology' and 'anthropology' on display. The foundation of the National Museum is a colonial institution in India. It came up with the dream of imperial government in 1912 but existed as a blueprint in their minds. Like Indian Museum in Kolkata, it was also thought to 'define an intellectual domain' in the colony and in Europe and a homage to the

British imperial power<sup>13</sup>. It was because the collection and research were based on their knowledge. After a long gap in the mid-1940s, interest from the British government towards establishing the museum once again took shape. The report of the Ministry of Education, 1950 stated, in November 1944, the Royal Asiatic Society (the name of Asiatic society at that time) of Bengal, along with the Anthropological Society of Bombay, addressed the Government to set a National Museum at New Delhi, the capital of India. Many new initiatives toward the research and groundwork of this were taken by the government, as the investigation by the Gwyer committee and training program of the curator, etc.<sup>14</sup>

In the book 'Monuments, Objects, Histories', Guha-Thakurta has mentioned about the two very important events which were kind of crucial eye-opener about Indian Art. The two international art exhibition about the showcase of the masterpieces of Indian art at the Burlington House, London<sup>15</sup>. One of them held in 1931 and another during November 1947 to February 1948. After India got independence in 1947, the new nationalist government came in the administrative power. To celebrate the independence, a spectacular grand display of "Exhibition of Indian Art" was arranged in the Government house at New Delhi on 6th November to 31st December 1948. It was a follow-up exhibition with the collections displayed in previous exhibition in Europe<sup>16</sup>. Plans for the institution with the former great collection as a national museum were passed off to Indian government. These eventually become the collections at the National Museum. And soon with this, the National Museum was established in 1949. Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime minister regarded it as a place where Indians would feel proud of their history, and get inspired to share the identity of being an Indian citizen together<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>13</sup> See Kristy K. Phillips, *The National Museum of India: A Museum to and of the Nation*, Making National Museums, Limkopin University, 97.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>15</sup> See Tapati Guha- Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories Institution of Art in colonial and Post-colonial India. Permanent Black*, USA and India, 2004, pp 175- 204.

<sup>16</sup> See Preface to *Exhibition of Indian Art*, held at the Government House, New Delhi, November 6- December 31, 1948. Catalogue and Album, department of Archaeology, Ministry of education, New Delhi, 1948

<sup>17</sup> See Kristy K. Phillips, *The National Museum of India: A Museum to and of the Nation*, Making National Museums, Limkopin University, 97.

The original conception of this museum, including the research and the physical development of its collection and its location, was very categorically appropriated to the 'Indian art history.' Also, the philosophical meaning and significance of the objects of Art had drawn up under the colonial framework. The imperial collection of objects for research became a collection for national heritage later. It has been achieved through detachment and isolation of objects from their specific local contexts and then reinserting them into a public building dedicated towards the national vision of the country. However, with these strategic changes as a celebratory exhibition after independence, the meaning and significance of the collection and display have been directed toward a national significance. The establishment of the Indian National Museum in the era of the Indian government symbolized national aspirations, cultural pride, heritage, and modernity of the post-colonial Indian government. The categorization and display of Indian Art set the 'Indian art history,' which till date is followed by the art schools in India. In this regard, Kristy K. Phillips calls the National Museum of India<sup>18</sup>,

“an instrument of both imperial and nationalist agendas.”

After independence, museums have become a testing ground for modern government ideologies to visually represent all the entanglements of a new nation-state. It seems like in a modern state, national symbols and their significance are constantly built and reproduced in association with the representative authority and representation of their cultural pride and heritage. In the vision of the Indian National Museum, more than its public, it reflects the interpretations of its creators and the present authority. In the galleries, along with the display of objects in chronological order, there is limited textual information about the material of which the objects are made, the period of their making, the Indian dynasty of a historical time who ruled at that time. It hardly shows a little information on their function. So visually, the history of material culture can hardly be traced. Nevertheless, there was almost no data available on their collective history.

In the era of independence, there were some reputed large imperially-founded museums in many cities in India. Like the Indian

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 97.

Museum in Calcutta, established in 1814, Government Museum of Madras, established in 1851, the Victoria & Albert Museum, established in 1872, The Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay was established in 1905, The Albert Hall, now the Central Museum in Jaipur, established in 1876, The Patna Museum and Nalanda Museum, established in 1917. The Diwan Bahadur Radhakrishna Jalan Museum in Bihar, established in 1919, etc. Nevertheless, despite having them already, it was assumed and stated by the new nationalist government that there is no institution where the Indian public as a national citizen can witness an ideal representation of the development of Indian civilization. This is where National Museum fills an institutional void in the country<sup>19</sup>. The narrative of the institution was built in a way that would help to define an independent country and an ancient civilization.

Susan Ashley has investigated the role and function of museum authority in the context of Canadian Museums and has discussed that museum is an instrument of the state articulating identity of the nation. Simultaneously it is a public space for opinion sharing and debates about public identity discourse, social cohesion, and social inclusion<sup>20</sup>. Since the colonial era till today, the exoticization and the exclusion of others are much debatable issues. When the museum is a state authority, there is an issue of power, domination, and exclusion implied with the representation. About nationalism, Stuart Hall describes, the state defines its identity as homogeneous. And that homogeneity is achieved through an intentional closure of some subjects who share some commonalities. He argued, that homogeneity, often assumed as unity is not natural and correct as there is a play of power and exclusion<sup>21</sup>.

On the second floor in the National Museum of India, an exhibition room is mentioned with the title 'Tribal lifestyle of northeast India,' where different objects have been displayed with little textual, contextual, and functional information. Figure 1 and figure 2 suggest the minimum information regarding the object displayed. Only some displays of functional objects are suggestive of their functions. Figure 4 is suggestive of the functionality of the

---

<sup>19</sup> See Government of India, *Construction of National Museum at New Delhi, Phase I*, Ministry of Education report, New Delhi, 1955.

<sup>20</sup> See Susan Ashley, *State Authority and the Public Sphere: Ideas on the Changing Role of the Museum as a Canadian Social Institution*, Museum and Society [Online], pp 5-17.

<sup>21</sup> See Stuart Hall, *Culture, Community, Nation*, Cultural Studies, volume 7, issue 3, 1993.

instrument displayed to an extent. Along with this kind of display, it has shown few photographs about the social and functional life of the subject displayed. What is predominantly noticeable inside this gallery is that many tribal communities live in North-East India, but while representation, the museum chooses very few dominant categories. A large section of minor categories has not been presented. The basis of the selection and exclusion for a national exhibition is not transparent. Though scarcity of space is visible, this kind of representation in fragments requires enough justification. As a state institution and an authority holding power, museums control the preservation of historical narratives and knowledge about the culture. Therefore, museums are in charge of great responsibility toward the representation of cultural identity. However, in most cases, museums in India have chosen to represent the dominant culture and the knowledge seen through their perspective.

Taking inference from the Marxist theorists, such as Gramsci, Althusser and many, Ashley mentioned<sup>22</sup>,

“Museums would be considered a means by which ideology, that unconscious bias by which we live, is reinforced, not only through its overt communications but through its very way of being in the world. It could be seen as hegemonic, one of the ways in which the cultural ideologies of the ruling class are made acceptable to the masses.”

## **Models for Nation Making in the post-colonial India**

In the book ‘Birth of the Museum’ keeping the European audiences at the centre of his discussion Tony Bennett writes that the establishment of modern public museums and galleries in nineteenth-century has a close link towards defining a nation. They functioned as hegemonic<sup>23</sup> and civilizing agencies, to demonstrate a correct way of being within a nation which is set by the dominant society and its economic system<sup>24</sup>.

From a Gramscian perspective, the birth of museums is forming a new set of relationships between state and people. So in a pedagogic sense, as he argued, that state is an educator, and it

---

<sup>22</sup> See Susan Ashley, *State Authority and the Public Sphere: Ideas on the Changing Role of the Museum as a Canadian Social Institution*, Museum and Society, 6.

<sup>23</sup> For Gramsci, hegemony refers to the domination of an ideological rule of one social class over another within a nation. See Gramsci, Selection from the prison notebook, 1971.

<sup>24</sup> See Tony Bennet, *The Birth of the museum, history, theory, politics*, Routledge.

precisely tends to create a new narrative about civilization. (Gramsci 1971, 247)

The work done by Benedict Anderson about the 'imagined communities' is based largely on the process of communication and also the issue of nation-building. According to him, nation-building and nationalism are two phenomena emerging in the modern era with a revolution in a system of values. The revolution can be of fading out of religion, of language, dissolving a style and pattern in visual culture, or weakening of an idea of a set of the social system and anything with indigenous values-oriented with it. These revolutions have developed new techniques of propagating and reviving the old values with considerable impact on the public. If we look into the literature at the time of transition of power from imperial to Indian government, novels and newspaper writings, for example, the published text by the nationalists of the pre-independent India, we can understand that it indeed involved the concept of the imagined communities.<sup>25</sup> The reader finds himself/herself placed in a specific time period in society. All the characters play their role in a linear axis of time, and the narrative is linear. So imagined community is the community or the members of a national culture who are aroused by the same kind of thought at the same time. Anderson has marked out the community based on language. According to Anderson, the print press development has made it possible as it has made an institutional space for the development of the modern nation. We can pick an example from his text, a silent performance of reading a newspaper is a mass ceremony repeated by millions in private. However, there is communication happening between all the readers with authority. Each communicant is aware of the existence of the other readers, so with this act, they share a common identity silently (Anderson, 39). That is how an imagined community is envisioned. Nevertheless, if we broaden the border of his idea into communication through visual culture and museum display, there is an imagined community for a national display or representation of nation that associates national sentiment, which is shared among many.

---

<sup>25</sup> See Anderson, *imagined Communities*, pp.17-49.



Benedict Anderson believed museums are tools for narrating the official nationalism and a symbol of the imagined communities (1983). However, the nation is imagined with symbolic representation through traditions, museums, monuments, and ceremonies (Evans, 1999, 2). Our imagination of the past has a linearity of narrative. Furthermore, nationalism as an ideology is rooted in our past, which with time becomes a part of our national consciousness. A museum representing a nation is imagined as a 'sentimentalized nation' (Sharon Macdonald, 2003) which is a sense of association, belonging to a common group that Anderson also has mentioned. Referring to many great scholars of all time, Susan Ashley has concluded, this nationalism is a great achievement of capitalism, where with the consent of the masses, the interests and identity of a dominant culture are established. And museums contribute to achieving so<sup>26</sup>.

The ethnographic gallery and the gallery titled 'Village life of Assam' In the Assam State Museum, established in 1953, display a central idea and theme of nationalism of the Indian independence movement through the portrayal of Village Life extensively. As a part of the nationalist movement, Gandhi repeatedly advocated for the significance of the village as ideal in the making and representing the image and identity of India as a nation. These two separate galleries are displayed with objects and materials in a typical manner, as suggested in figure 6, that signify ethnic identities, social and cultural lives of many aboriginal races, illustrated in village condition. The village life gallery contains beautifully crafted dioramas and recreated village scenes to demonstrate many subjects like progressive life in an Assam village, craft practice, and sometimes simply the visual ambiance of an idealized and romanticized village, a subject for the urban audience.

## **Conclusion**

With this discussion, the museum could be clearly understood as an authority and a hegemonic voice of the state. Thus, domination and exclusion have been implied with the representation towards the

---

<sup>26</sup> See Susan Ashley, *State Authority and the Public Sphere: Ideas on the Changing Role of the Museum as a Canadian Social Institution*, Museum and Society [Online], pp 5-17.

establishment of the hegemony. Nevertheless, the exclusion naturally brings an alternative use of the museum as a public sphere.

Many theorists would say that museums and national narratives are trying to favor and propagate national integration with homogeneity. However, rather than neglecting the crucial minority subjects and homogenizing an identity of a nation, the advances in communication and technology must be used to increase the awareness of the minority groups about the differences between themselves and with others and make them conscious of their specificity.

Moreover, the establishment of Nationalism is a part of politics. It is the political aspiration of the representational authority or the state or of those who support it. This concept supported many scholars and historians, like John Breuilly, Partha Chatterjee, and many.

In the period the nineteen fifties and sixties, nationalism was a part of the anti-colonial struggle in India. It became a political movement with the establishment of the 'Indian National Congress'<sup>27</sup> in 1885, which was then a reform movement under the British rule in India from previous decades, with the formation of several provincial politics. However, simultaneously nationalism became a new institutional hegemonic practice in the post-colonial state. Moreover, it get disciplined and normalized. And according to Chatterjee, "by the 1970s nationalism has become a matter of ethnic politics."<sup>28</sup>

Museums propagate an accepted narrative about one piece of historical or cultural information. They have been representing the singularity of culture and not the complexities and porosity within it. In most of the earlier displays, the concept of civilization from the nineteenth-century perspective displays the world in virtual isolation, into distinct civilizations, unique and distant from everything, with demarcated territories, a single dominant language, and differentiated religion of its own. Nevertheless, later studies showed that civilizations are essentially porous and complex. As when a

---

<sup>27</sup> The Indian National Congress is a political party founded by a retired British ICS officer Allan Octavian Hume in British India as a platform for civil and political dialogue among the educated Indians. They made the demand of civil rights, administrative, constitutional, and economic policies in favour of the Indian people.

<sup>28</sup> See James Manor, 'Ethnicity' and politics in India, 1996.

civilization has many associations with other civilizations, and there are a considerable borrowing and lending are resulting in an admixture of knowledge and advance experiments. Generally, it is the period of highest achievement for that civilization. It is generally the classical age. According to Prof. Thapar,

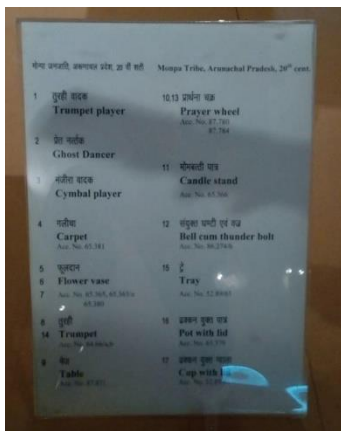
“The attempt in the museum therefore, should be to show the porosity and the contacts and what resulted from them.”

Museums in India are by in large, an instrument of imperial, colonial, and nationalist agendas. Furthermore, the display inside the museum is the product of long-existing epistemologies from its inception. From their historical origin as repositories of material culture to its evolution as authority asserting identity, nationalism, social inclusion, etc., museums have travelled a long way. There are also ongoing debates about the need to assert authority over a homogeneous national representation and how inclusive the representation of a nation is. Such hegemonic representation is like offering one expert voice for many. There are many communities whose cultural and material practices remained unrepresented. Though only one dominant class cannot be represented and accepted for every category, museums in India have depended on the concept of the singularity of culture and civilization since long back. In post-independent India, when the ideas of secularism, a nation with integrated cultures and plurality are being discussed, the earlier concept of singularity gradually loses its relevance. Moreover, the colonial epistemology on civilization and culture is now challenged by the contemporary critical theories on knowledge. Some new museums are also experimenting with their display narrative and methodology, trying to understand whether a new type of discourse about culture, tradition, heritage, and nation is possible.

**Figures**



**Figure 1-** Display in Indian Museum, Kolkata



**Figure 2-** Textual information about the object displayed on the theme 'Tribal lifestyle of north east India' in the Anthropological Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi



**Figure 3-** Objects along with text displayed on the theme 'Tribal lifestyle of north east India' in the Anthropological Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi



**Fig 4-** Floorplan of the galleries at the National Museum, New Delhi.



**Figure 5-** Display within glass cabinets demonstrate the functionality of the objects displayed inside the Anthropological Gallery, National Museum, New Delhi



**Figure 6-** Utensils and objects of domestic life, Assam state museum, Guwahati, from the album of Bhaskar Hazarika

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Amundsen, Arne Bugge, and Andreas Nyblom (eds). "National Museums in a Global World." *NaMu III*, Linköping Electronic Conference Proceedings, 31, Linköping University Electronic Press, Linköping, Sweden, 2007, pp 106-116. Web.<http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/031/>> (accessed on 21 Jan. 2019)
2. Archambault, JoAllyn." Native Communities, Museums and Collaboration." *Practicing Anthropology*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Collaborative Museum Ethnography, Spring 2011, pp. 16-20, Society for Applied Anthropology, Web.[www.istor.org/stable/24782025](http://www.istor.org/stable/24782025)> (Accessed on 18 Jan. 2019)
3. Ashley, Susan. "State Authority and the Public Sphere: Ideas on the Changing Role of the Museum as a Canadian Social Institution." *Museum and Society* [Online], Vol 3, No 1, 2005, pp 5-17. Web. [www.108.lamp.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas/article/view/61](http://www.108.lamp.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas/article/view/61)> (accessed on 18 Oct. 2020)
4. Athias, Renato. "Museums, Ethnographic Collections, and Virtual Repatriation: New issues for an old debate." *academia.edu*, Web.<[www.academia.edu/37105863/MUSEUMS\\_ETHNOGRAPHIC\\_COLLECTIONS\\_A](http://www.academia.edu/37105863/MUSEUMS_ETHNOGRAPHIC_COLLECTIONS_A)

Pronita Mondal, Ritwij Bhowmik- **The Complexity of Historical Museums: An Experimental Zone in the Context of Colonial, Post-colonial and Modern India**

---

- [ND V IRITUAL REPATRIATION NEW ISSUES FOR AN OLD DEBATE](#)> (accessed on 18 Oct. 2020)
5. Bal, Mieke. "Telling, Showing, Showing off." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Spring, 1992, pp. 556-594, The University of Chicago Press. Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/1343816](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343816)> (Accessed on 16 Jan. 2019)
  6. Bann, Stephen. "The Return to Curiosity: Shifting Paradigms in Contemporary Museum Display." *Art and its Publics Museum Studies at the Millennium*, edited by Andrew McClellan, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, USA, pp 117-130. Print.
  7. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined community: Reflections on the Origin and spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983.
  8. Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. Routledge, 1995. Print.
  9. Bhattacharya, Sachindra Nath. *Museum Movement in Eastern India A Historical Analysis*. 2006, University of Kalyani, PhD Thesis. Print.
  10. Bhowmik, Ritwij. "150 Years of Calcutta's Heritage Art-College: A Comprehensive Study of Its Present Declining Situation." *European Academic Research*, Volume 3, Issue. 2, 2015, pp. 1428–1444. Print.
  11. Boswell, Davi, Jessica Evans, (Eds.). "*Representing the Nation: A Reader – Histories, Heritage and Museums*." Routledge, London & New York, 1999
  12. Buck, Tracy. "Confronting the Other in the Nationalist Art History Narratives and National Museum of India." *NaMu III*, Linköping University, November 2007. Web.<[ep.liu.se/ecp/article.asp?issue=031&article=009&volume](http://ep.liu.se/ecp/article.asp?issue=031&article=009&volume) > (accessed on 18 Oct. 2020)
  13. Cann, Stacey. "Participatory Curatorial Practices: An Online Approach." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 2, No. 14 [Special Issue], July 2012. Web.<<http://www.ijhssnet.com/journal/index/1138>>(accessed on 18 Oct. 2020)
  14. Capriccioso. Rob. "Museum to remove controversial Native American dioramas." *IndianCountryToday*, 12 September, 2009. Web. <[https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/museum-to-remove-controversial-native-american-dioramas-MidODY\\_kzkuOJAh1bhbhLQ/](https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/museum-to-remove-controversial-native-american-dioramas-MidODY_kzkuOJAh1bhbhLQ/)>
  15. Chakrabary, Dipesh. "Museums in late Democracies." *Humanities Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1,2002, pp 5-12. Web. <[search.informit.com.au/fullText;dn=148808613284572;res=IELHSS](http://search.informit.com.au/fullText;dn=148808613284572;res=IELHSS) >(accessed on May 24, 2016)
  16. Chakrabarty Dipesh, "Indian Modernity once colonial, now global", *The university of Rhode Island*, sept. 29, Lecture, web.
  17. Chatterjee, Partha. "Our Modernity." *SEPHIS CODESRIA*, 1997, lecture, web.<https://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/files/partha1.pdf>
  18. Dean, David, and Peter E Rider. "Museums, Nation and Political History in the Australian National Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization." *Museum and society*, volume 3, No. 1, Mar 2005, pp 35-50.
  19. Dutta, Arindam."The Politics of Display: India 1886 and 1986." *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, no. 30-31, Dec. 1997, pp-115-145, Digital South Asia Library, Web.
  20. "Exhibition of Indian Art." Held at the Government House, November 6- December 31, 1948. Catalogue and Album, department of Archaeology, Ministry of education, New Delhi, 1948, Print.
  21. Fleming, David. "Positioning the museum for social inclusion." *Museums, Society, Inequality*, edited by Richard Sandell, Routledge, London and New York, 2002.
  22. Government of India, "Establishment of a National Museum of Art, Archaeology and Anthropology – Selection of site for building and securing of temporary accommodation" *Ministry of Education Report*, New Delhi, 1950. Print.
  23. Government of India, "Construction of National Museum at New Delhi, Phase I" *Ministry of Education report*, New Delhi, 1955. Print.
  24. Greenhill, Eilean Hooper. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. Routledge, London and New York, Taylor & Francis Group, 1992. Print.

25. Hall, Stuart. "Introduction." *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and P. DuGay (eds.), Sage Publications, London, 1996, pp 1-17.
26. Hall, Stuart. "Culture, Community, Nation." *Cultural Studies*, volume 7, issue 3, 1993, pp 349-363, web.<<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389300490251>>
27. Hayford, Augustus Casely. "A Way of Being: Some Reflections on the Sainsbury African Galleries." *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, No. 14, pp. 113-128, MEG Conference 2001: Transformations, The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, March 2002, Museum Ethnographers Group, Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/40793694](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40793694)>(Accessed on 16 Jan. 2019)
28. Hein, George E. "Learning in the Museum." *Museum Meanings*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1998.<<https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/en>>(accessed on May 24, 2016)
29. Higonnet, Anne. "Museum Sight." *Art and its Publics Museum Studies at the Millennium*, edited by Andrew McClellan, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, USA, pp 133-148.
30. Homi Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation" *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
31. Jaffrelot, christophe. "For a theory of Nationalism." *Questions de recherche/Research in Question*, CERI/ CNRS, No 10, June 2003.
32. Johnson, Gordon." Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism, Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1880-1915." *Cambridge South Asian Studies*, series 14, 1974.
33. Kaniari, Assimina. "Curatorial Style and Art Historical Thinking: Exhibitions as Objects of Knowledge." *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 147. 2014. pp 446 – 452, 29 September 2014, ScienceDirect, Web.<<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.136>> (01 march 2019)
34. Kasfir, Sidney Littlefield. "Cast, Miscast: The Curator's Dilemma", *African Arts*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (winter, 1997), pp. 1+4+6+8-9+93. Web.<<https://doi.org/10.2307/3337464>>
35. Kevannoy. "Are Museums Accidentally Supporting Stereotypes about Native Americans?" *Real Archaeology*, 09 December, 2013.Web.<<http://pages.vassar.edu/realarchaeology/author/kevannoy/>>
36. Lane, Paul. "Breaking the Mould?: Exhibiting Khoisan in Southern African Museums." *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 12, No. 5, Oct., 1996, pp. 3-10, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/2783542](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783542)> (Accessed on 16 Jan. 2019)
37. Lewis, Geoffrey D."Museum." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 07, 2019. Web. <[www.britannica.com/topic/museum-cultural-institution](http://www.britannica.com/topic/museum-cultural-institution)> (accessed on October 18, 2020)
38. Macleod, Roy. "Post-colonialism and Museum Knowledge: Revisiting the Museums of the Pacific." *Pacific Science*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp 308-318, University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.
39. Macdonald, Sharon, editor. *The Politics of Display- Museums, science, culture*. Routledge, London and New York, 1998.
40. Macdonald, Sharon J."Museums, national, postnational and transcultural identities" *Museum and society [online]*,Vol1, No 1, pp 1-16, 2003. Web.<<https://journals.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas/article/view/3/50>> (accessed on October 18, 2020)
41. Markham, S. F. and H. Hargreaves. *The Museums of India*. Museums Association, London, 1936. Web.<<https://archive.org/download/TheMuseumsOfIndia>> (accessed on October 18, 2020)
42. Martinez, Doreen E. "Wrong Directions and New Maps of Voice, Representation, and Engagement: Theorizing Cultural Tourism, Indigenous Commodities, and the Intelligence of Participation." *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 545-573, Special Issue: Native American Cultural Tourism: Spectatorship and Participation, Fall 2012, University of Nebraska Press. <[www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/amerindiquar.36.4.0545](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/amerindiquar.36.4.0545)> (accessed on 16 Jan 2019)
43. McClellan, Andrew. "A Brief History of the Art Museum Public." *Art and its Publics Museum Studies at the Millennium*, edited by Andrew McClellan, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, USA, pp 1-50. Print.
44. Mears, Halen, and Claire Wintle. "Brave New Worlds: Transforming museum ethnography Through Technology- An Introduction." *Journal of Museum Ethnography*,

- No. 27, Annual Conference of the Museum Ethnographers Group, University of Brighton, 15–16 April 2013, pp. 3-11. Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/43915859](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43915859)> (Accessed on 16 Jan. 2019)
45. Merkel, Jayne. "The Museum as Artifact." *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976- ), Vol. 26, No. 1 (winter, 2002), pp. 66-79, Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/40260572](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40260572)> (Accessed on 10 April 2020)
46. Mesaria, Swetabehe D, and Dr Neerja Jaiswal. "A Study on the Colonial Monuments of British Era of Kolkata, India." *Research Journal of Recent Sciences*, Vol. 3(IVC-2014), pp 99- 107, 2014, Web.<[www.isca.in](http://www.isca.in), [www.isca.me](http://www.isca.me)> (accessed on 18 Oct. 2020)
47. Miller, Daniel. "Artefacts and the meaning of things." *Museums in the Material World*, edited by Simon J. Knell, Routledge, London and New York, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007, pp 166- 186.
48. Mitra, Debala 1971. *Buddhist Manuments*. Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta. Web. <<https://archive.org/details/BuddhistMonuments>>(accessed on 18 Oct. 2020)
49. Obrist, Hans Ulrich. *A Brief History of Curating*. JRP|Ringier and Les Presses du Réel, October, 2008.
50. Oestreich, Lurie. "Museumland Revisited." *Human Organization*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 180-187. Web.<<https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.40.2.233x2q1866554972>>
51. Pearce, Susan, editor. "Art in Museums." *New research in museum studies, An International Series*, The Athlone Press, 1995, London & Atlantic Highlands.
52. Peers, Laura, and Alison K. Brown, editors. *Museums and Source communities*. Routledge, London and New York, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.
53. Petrov, Julia. "Cross- Purposes: Museum Display And Material Culture." *CrossCurrents*, Vol. 62, No. 2, June 2012, pp. 219-234, Wiley, Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/24461838](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24461838)> (Accessed on 31 may 2019)
54. Phillips, Kristy K. "The National Museum of India: A Museum to and of the Nation." Linköping Electronic Conference Proceedings, NaMu; Making National Museums Program; Setting the Frames; 26-28 February; Norrköping; Sweden, Issue 22, 19 sept. 2007. Web.<[ep.liu.se/ecp/article.asp?issue=022&article=009&volume=0#](http://ep.liu.se/ecp/article.asp?issue=022&article=009&volume=0#)> (accessed on 18 Oct. 2020)
55. Plato, "Republic, trans." Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953. Print.
56. Preiser, R. "Observing representational practices in art and anthropology – a transdisciplinary approach." *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, April 2010, pp. 57-72. Web.<DOI: 10.4102/td.v6i1.121>
57. Preziosi ,Donald. "Artifice and Danger: The Dilemma of the Museum."University of California, May 2009
58. Rankin, Elizabeth. "Creating/Curating Cultural Capital: Monuments and Museums for Post- Apartheid South Africa." *Humanities*, 21 March 2013. Web.<[www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/2/1/72/htm](http://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/2/1/72/htm)>(accessed on 15 Jan 2019)
59. Re-Imagine Museums and Galleries: UK-India Opportunities and Partnerships, British Council, October 2014.
60. Rice, Danielle. "Museums: Theory, Practice, and Illusion." *Art and its Publics Museum Studies at the Millennium*, edited by Andrew McClellan, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, USA, pp 77-96. Print.
61. Shelton, Anthony Alan. " The Future of Museum Ethnography." *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, No. 9, May 1997, pp. 33-48, Museum Ethnographers Group. Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/40793580](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40793580)> (Accessed on 16 Jan. 2019)
62. Simonsson, Märit. "Displaying Spaces: Spatial Design, Experience, and Authenticity in Museums", *Department of Culture and Media Studies*, Umea university, 2014. Print.
63. Singh, Kavita. "The Museum is National." *India International Centre Quarterly*, WINTER 2002-SPRING 2003, Vol. 29, No. 3/4, India: A National Culture? pp. 176-196. Web.<[www.jstor.com/stable/23005825](http://www.jstor.com/stable/23005825)> (accessed on 15 Oct, 2020)
64. Soares, Bruno Brulon, and Anna Leshchenko. "Museology in Colonial Contexts: A Call for Decolonisation of Museum Theory." *ICOFOM Study Series*, Issue 46, ICOM -



Pronita Mondal, Ritwij Bhowmik- **The Complexity of Historical Museums: An Experimental Zone in the Context of Colonial, Post-colonial and Modern India**

---

- International Council of Museums, 15 October 2018, Web.<http://journals.openedition.org/iss/895> (accessed on 10 October 2020)
65. Thakurta, Tapati Guha. "Marking Independence: The Ritual of a National Art Exhibition." *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, no. - 30-31, December 1997, pp 89- 114. Digital South Asia Library, Web.
  66. Thakurta, Tapati Guha. "Monuments, Objects, Histories Institution of Art in colonial and Post-colonial India." *Permanent Black*, USA and India, 2004, Print.
  67. Thapar, Romila. "Museums in India: past and future." *Seminar Web-edition*, Raj and Romesh Thapar (eds), Issue 659, June 2014. Web.<[www.india-seminar.com/semframe.html](http://www.india-seminar.com/semframe.html)> (accessed on May 24, 2016)
  68. Thapar, Romila. "Time as a metaphor of history: Early India." *Oxford University Press*, 1996, Print.
  69. Thapar, Romila. "The Museum of the Future." *Museum of the Future: Episode II*, Goethe Institut. Web.<[www.goethe.de/india/museumofthefuture](http://www.goethe.de/india/museumofthefuture)> (accessed on 30 Sept. 2020)
  70. Walliss, Jillian. "Exhibiting Environmental History: The Challenge of Representing Nation." *Environment and History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, August 2012, pp. 423-445, White Horse Press. Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/23250943](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23250943)> (Accessed on 16 Jan. 2019)
  71. "The West Bengal Capital City (change of Name) Act, 2001" *West Bengal Act XVIII of 2001*, Law department Legislative, Government of West Bengal. Print.
  72. Wexler, Alice. "Museum Culture and the Inequities of Display and Representation." *Visual Arts Research*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2007), pp. 25-33, University of Illinois Press. Web.<[www.jstor.org/stable/20715431](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20715431)> (Accessed on 31 may 2019)