



Museums of India – A short introduction

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Art as we hear this word, automatically our mind starts thinking, feeling & admiring all the wonderful & soulful creations of the world and in artistic way when we talk about art some get the glimpse of Ajanta and many other great artist's works & masterpieces of miniature art. To preserve these masterpieces and Indian heritage of art, the British in India set up many organizations who are working in preserving and collecting treasures of Indian art. In modern time these efforts turn into museums. There are some great museums as below:

Delhi:

The National Museum: One of India's finest museums. It has a vast and almost completely comprehensive selection of Indian art series from prehistoric to the late medieval periods. With its modern extension and display areas, it provides a representative introduction to the development of India's artistic traditions and also includes small collections from Central Asia and of the pre-Columbian art of the Americas.

The National Gallery of Modern Art: Tourists of India and foreign have the glimpse and significant aspect of present life of Indian contemporary art. This may be because India has so much to offer by way of ancient and medieval masterpieces, that there is no time for any more. The National Gallery of Modern Art is one of India's best maintained museums, and is devoted exclusively to Indian painting and sculpture of the post-1857 era.

The Crafts Museum: It honors craftsmen and artists who have kept alive Indian culture's ancient artistic traditions in all its wondrous diversity and originality. This museum was established in 1956 by the All India Handicrafts Board and occupies over eight acres within New Delhi's main exhibition grounds Pragati Maidan, next to the impressive fortress of Purana Qila.

The Archaeological Museum at the Red Fort: It was built by Emperor Shah Jahan around 1649, when he transferred his capital from Agra to Delhi. Within the huge red sandstone fortress are the royal palaces, some in marble, beautifully inlaid and painted to perfection to match the superior aesthetic standards of the emperor. Next to the riverfront there are six palaces, including the Diwan - Khas, the Khas Mahal, Rang Mahal and further to the south, the Mumtaz Mahal where the Archaeological Survey has set up a site museum. This museum displays a collection of objects belonging to the Mughal period.

Mumbai

The Prince of Wales Museum: This Museum can be broadly described as a British interpretation of Mughal architecture, the so-called Indo-Saracenic style. The structure forms a long rectangle of three storeys, raised in the centre to accommodate the entrance porch. It is named after Prince George who visited India in 1905 and founded the building. There are the collection of Indian miniature paintings, Tibetan, Nepali art, European paintings, Armory and Textiles.

The Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum, Pune: The museum contains the collection of a dedicated lover of Indian art, the late Dinkar Kelkar. He has spent almost 60 untiring years travelling and purchasing objects from the remote villages and towns of India. Kelkar's passion and sense of humour are reflected in every item of the collection, and his contribution to the study and preservation of art has already become a legend. Here we find Indian everyday craft collection as lamps, wood works, sculptures, textiles etc.

Calcutta

The Indian Museum: This is the oldest museum in India, dating back to the 19th century when the Asiatic Society felt the need to establish a museum in Calcutta. Explorations and surveys conducted to investigate the economic potential of the Indian sub-continent led to the collection of items of mineralogical, botanical and zoological value. Artifacts of archaeological significance were also documented, and in sum, an amazing collection had been assembled that had to be properly catalogued and preserved. This museum is dedicated to Bharhut Buddhist sculptures, railings, sculptures from medieval school, textiles and other arts.

Chennai

The Government State Museum and National Art Gallery: The architecture of many of the museums built during the British period is often unique in style, and the Government Museum, at Chennai is no exception. This large complex consists of the Museum, a theatre and the National Art Gallery. A branch of the Asiatic Society of London, wanted to set up a museum like the one in Calcutta. The present buildings are bursting with objects, in crowded displays in an attempt to accommodate as much as possible of the huge, very precious collection. Here are the collection of sculptures from Amravati.

Rajasthan

The Government Museum, Alwar: Maharajas Jai Singh and Viney Singh were instrumental in setting up this museum, which is housed in a portion of the old city place of Alwar. It has a representative collection of sculptures of the region, paintings and manuscripts, and a number of articles belonging to the royal family of Alwar, such as textiles, royal robes, turbans and ceremonial gowns.

The Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh Museum, Jaipur: This museum is divided into three main sections: the Textile Gallery in Mubarak Mahal; the Arms Gallery; and the Art Gallery in the Diwan Khana.

Gujarat

The Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery, Vadodara: This museum is located in Sayaji Bagh, a garden that is popular with the inhabitants of Baroda (or Vadodara), who picnic and stroll there. The collection in the museum belongs largely to the former ruler of the state, Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III. Here are the collection of Indian paintings, archeological artifacts, art from Japan, China, Nepal, Tibet and Europe.

Orissa

The Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar: The collection of the museum core on the arts of the region. Orissa has one of India's oldest and most artistic traditions, ranging from Buddhism, Jainism to Hinduism, including the building of the magnificent temples of Bhubaneswar and the Sun Temple at Konarak in the 13th century. There are several galleries devoted to sculptures from these temples, though many would prefer to see the reliefs in situ, in the nearby temples themselves.

Goa

The archaeological museum, Old Goa: Old Goa is just nine kilometres (six miles) from Panaji, the capital of Goa. At this site are numerous churches that date from the 16th century onwards. The church of St Cajetan was modelled after St Peter's in Rome. The Basilica de Bom Jesus contains the mortal remains of the patron saint, St Francis Xavier. The Museum housed in the lovely old convent of St Francis of Assisi has exhibits from different periods of the history of Goa. The key gallery has statues belonging to the Hindu period-sculptures of deities such as Uma-Mahesa. There are number of sati (suttee) and hero stones.

Assam

The Assam State Museum, Guwahati: This museum was founded in 1940 with a nucleus collection assembled by the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti (Assam Research Society). The museum's collection is largely archaeological, with sections devoted to epigraphy, numismatics and iconography. Here we can find art and sculptures of the region.

Andhra Pradesh

The Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad: In the mid-19th century, the Nizam of Hyderabad appointed a prime minister to whom was given the title of Salar Jung. His son, Salar Jung II, and grandson Salar Jung III, were also selected as prime ministers by later rulers. It was these three men who contributed to what is now called the Salar Jung Collection in this museum. There are excellent collections of jade, weapons, textiles and metal ware, which are significant as they provide a glimpse into post-Mughal court life and are suggestive of the grandeur and wealth of rulers in days gone by.

Madhya Pradesh

The Archaeological Museum, Khajuraho: Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh stand some magnificent temples, the pride of Indian architecture. From an estimated 84, only 22 temples remain, some of which are Hindu, others Jain. the temples are quite special, exemplary of what is usually called the Central Indian Style' of temple architecture. Khajuraho was once the city of temples of the Chandellas, under whose patronage the Jain and Hindu temples were built during the tenth to 12th centuries as Lakshman temple, Vishvanatha temple, Chitragupta temple, Kandariya Mahadeo temples, Parsvanatha temples.

The Archaeological Museum, Sanchi: The earliest explorations and subsequent excavations by Sir John Marshall, recorded in the work, The Monuments of Sanchi, describe in detail this flowering of Indian sculptural art under the Buddhists and Hindus over a period that stretches from the third century BC to the 13th century. The sculptured panels of the Sanchi stupas I and II have no parallel in the world. This is why the site museum at Sanchi was established and now stands at the base of the hill. The collection can be divided broadly into : excavated tools, implements, pottery and coins; caskets and containers which were one enshrined in the stupas; and sculptures of the Hinayana, Mahayana and Hindu periods. It is a pilgrimage center with unique excavations.

The Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal: The Bharat Bhavan was conceived and established as a cultural complex in the early 1980. Since then, this museum-library, theatre and music centre has played a vital role in the contemporary art scene, attracting artists and performers from all over India and abroad. The name of the museum is Roopankar, having collection of contemporary art with paintings and sculptures of Madhya Pradesh.

Uttar Pradesh

The Government Museum, Mathura: The historian and archaeologist, Mathura occupies a special place its mounds, and plains have yielded hundreds of sculptures and icons that establish the antiquity and status of the Mathura of ancient time. Not only for Hindus but also for Buddhists and Jains, Mathura is a city of great religious importance. Legend records that the Buddha visited here; during Mauryan rule, Emperor Ashoka (third century BC) built many stupas here. The Sunga dynasty that followed the Mauryans continued to patronise Mathura, till it was taken over by the Greek rulers in the last few centuries before the birth of Christ. Here are the collection of Buddhist sculptures, Kushan art, terracottas and coins.

The Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi: It is a museum with an outstanding collection of Indian Sculptures, paintings and textiles. This museum was started with the collection of Rai Krishndas.

The Archaeological Museum, Sarnath: Excavations at Sarnath have revealed the establishment of monasteries and the erection of stupas that brought hundreds of thousands of Buddhist pilgrims to the place where the Buddha discussed his philosophy and set up the first order, or sangha, of monks. Sculptures and artifacts from this site have been stored in the museum at Sarnath, and in their stony silence they commemorate the acts of faith and devotion of successive rulers and patrons of Buddhism, from the Mauryan period (second century BC) to the 13th century. It is a site museum with the collection of Buddhist sculptures.

Bihar

The State Museum, Patna: This museum was established in 1917 and was moved to its present building in the 1930s. The building is a hybrid of European, Mughal and Rajput architectural styles. The structure is absolutely unsuitable as a museum and lacks adequate ventilation and dust-proofing. The collection of the museum, however, is so outstanding that it is worth a visit, despite the poor display and upkeep. Here exquisite teracottas from Mauryan to gupta period. Bronze sculptures and other including the Didarganj Yakshi, the Mauryan Chauri Bearer.

Tamil Nadu

The Thanjavur Art Gallery, Thanjavur: A remarkable collection of south Indian sculptures and paintings is housed in the old palace buildings at Thanjavur (Tanjore). Thanjavur has been an art centre of great importance throughout almost the entire history of Tamil Nadu. During the Chola period, two magnificent temples were built in this region, the Brihadeswara Temple and the Gangakondacholapuram Temple (tenth to 11th centuries). We can see the collection of Chola bronzes.

Kerala

The Government Museum, Thiruvananthapuram: This museum was founded in 1957. The area around it has been laid out as a park and zoological garden. The museum has a fine collection in its natural history section.