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Subject: **Indian Culture**



Production of Courseware  
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Paper : **Museology**  
Module : **Museum—Meaning, Definition, Scope & Function**

  
ज्ञान-विज्ञान-विमुक्तये

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### Component-I (B) – Description of module:

Subject Name	Indian Culture
Paper Name	Museology
Module Name/Title	Museum Architecture
Module Id	IC / MUS / 01
Pre-requisites	Knowledge of Museums, its components, collections, functions and services
Objectives	To understand about a museum, its definition, about its various scopes and functions.
Keywords	Museum, definition, scope, functions

### E-text (Quadrant-I)

#### 1. Introduction

Museum is a building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are stored and exhibited. The word museum has classical origin and it has been taken from the Greek word mouseion, means “seat of the Muses”—the nine Greek Gods and designated a philosophical institution or a place of contemplation. Use of the Latin derivation of ‘mouseion’ is museum and it had been restricted in Roman times mainly to places of philosophical discussion. Thus, the great Museum at Alexandria, founded by Ptolemy I Soter early in the 3rd century BCE, with its college of scholars and its library, was more a prototype university than an institution to preserve and interpret material aspects of the heritage. The word museum was revived in 15th-century Europe to describe the collection of Lorenzo de’ Medici in Florence, but the term conveyed the concept of comprehensiveness rather than denoting a building. By the 17th century museum was being used in Europe to describe collections of curiosities. Ole Worm’s collection in Copenhagen was so called, and in England visitors to John Tradescant’s collection in Lambeth (now a London borough) called the array there a museum; the catalogue of this collection, published in 1656, was titled ‘Musaeum Tradescantianum’. In 1675 the collection, having become the property of Elias Ashmole, was transferred to the University of Oxford. A building was constructed to receive it, and this, soon after being opened to the public in 1683, became known as the Ashmolean Museum. Although there was some ambivalence in the use of museum in the legislation, drafted in 1753, after the foundation of the British Museum in 1753 the idea of museum became clear to common people as an institution to preserve and display a collection.

Use of the word museum during the 19th and most of the 20th century denoted a building housing cultural material to which the public had access. In India the concept museum came during late 18<sup>th</sup> Century after the formation of the Asiatic Society in 1793. The society took initiative to establish a museum with the available objects of different disciplines for the oriental studies. In view of that in 1814 the first museum in India and south Asia was established and now well known as Indian Museum. Later, as museums continued to respond to the societies, the emphasis on the building it became less dominant. Open-air museums, comprising a series of buildings or monuments preserved as objects, and ecomuseums, involving the interpretation of all aspects of an outdoor environment are

established. Now, virtual museums exist in electronic form on the Internet either having no connection with its real existence or for bringing certain benefits to existing museums. In later case, they remain dependent upon the collection, preservation, and interpretation of material things by the real museum. A museum now, is an institution that conserves its collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance, exhibits its collection of objects for public viewing that may be permanent or temporary.

## 2. Objectives

- To know about the meaning of a museum
- To know the latest definition of museum
- To understand various scopes of museum
- To know about various functions of museum

## 3. Definition of Museum

Many organisations across the world defined museum time to time, like by the American Association of Museum, Museum Association in Great Britain etc. After the formation of ICOM (International Council of Museums) in 1946, the organisation of museum professionals across the world, they defined museum in its statutes, Article 3, section 1, which is now acceptable in all the countries. ICOM went through few amendments to modify and update the definition of museum in accordance with the changing demands of the professionals.

The latest definition of museum by ICOM which is adopted in the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, held on August 24th, 2007, amended on the last definition which was amended in 2001. According to this, museum is defined as:

**‘A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment’.**

It was stated clearly in the definition of museum amended in the 18th General Assembly held in Barcelona, Spain, 6 July 2001 that

‘The above definition of a museum shall be applied without any limitation arising from the nature of the governing body, the territorial character, the functional structure or the orientation of the collections of the institution concerned.

In addition to institutions designated as "museums" the following qualify as museums for the purposes of this definition:

- natural, archaeological and ethnographic monuments and sites and historical monuments and sites of a museum nature that acquire, conserve and communicate material evidence of people and their environment;
- institutions holding collections of and displaying live specimens of plants and animals, such as botanical and zoological gardens, aquaria and vivaria;
- science centers and planetaria;
- non-profit art exhibition galleries;

- nature reserves; conservation institutes and exhibition galleries permanently maintained by libraries and archives centers; natural parks;
- international or national or regional or local museum organisations, ministries or departments or public agencies responsible for museums as per the definition given under this article;
- non-profit institutions or organisations undertaking conservation research, education, training, documentation and other activities relating to museums and museology;
- cultural centres and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible or intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity);
- such other institutions as the Executive Council, after seeking the advice of the Advisory Committee, considers as having some or all of the characteristics of a museum, or as supporting museums and professional museum personnel through museological research, education or training.'

#### **4. Scope of Museum**

A Scope is a stand-alone planning document of a museum that succinctly defines the purpose of its collection holdings at the present and for the future. It derives from the mission of the respective museum, as well as laws and regulations mandating the preservation of collections. A museum must have a Scope of Collection Statement. It guides a museum in the acquisition and management of those objects that contribute directly to the museums' mission, as well as those additional collections that the museum service is legally mandated to preserve. It is the critical basis for managing museum collections. Scope is referenced in museums' management planning, resource planning, long-range interpretive plan, and other planning documents that may affect the collection of museum objects or their use.

#### **Basis of the determination of the scope of a museum**

##### ***A. Aims, mission, vision and objectives of the museum***

- a) Legislation of the museum is formulated
- b) Policies and strategies are developed

##### ***B. Collection and related information acquired***

- a) Documentation of objects in museum collection
- b) Research
- c) Designing Education Programme
- d) Gallery Planning
- e) Planning for temporary, travelling and mobile exhibition
- f) Periodic maintenance of objects
- g) Developing museum publication for the dissemination of information

##### ***C. Location, architecture and public space available if museum***

- a) Planning for community development programme
- b) Planning for community participation programme
- c) Activity planning during special day, vacation, holidays etc. for school children or any target group
- d) Inviting volunteers, interns, artists, experts
- e) Participation in community programmes, fairs and festivals

### **Necessity of the 'Scope of Museum document**

The Scope of Museum document is a valuable tool for Museum operation

- It describes about the museum's collection section wise
- It helps to plan activities for the public, volunteers, and donors as well as to staff, field management.
- It is the road map which can guide to a museum in evaluating new acquisitions, in budgeting, prioritizing resources, and overall planning and management of different sections of collections.
- Defining scope of collections can be especially useful in justifying donation refusals.
- It can help museum to decide on selective acquisition which museum objects might be appropriate for hands-on use, and which might be appropriate for de-accessioning.
- It also helps in financial planning including manpower, cost of curation, maintenance, storage, security, inventory control, and energy costs to provide a stable environment for collections.
- It helps to maintain higher ethical standard followed by the appropriate legislations of the country.

### **Who prepares and approves a Scope of Museum Statement?**

The curator or other experienced museum staff responsible for the collection, education, public relations, community engagement program etc. prepare the 'Scope of Museum' or 'Scope of Collection' Statement. The statement then reviewed by the experts like archeologists, interpreters, scientists, naturalists, historians, archivists, and other resource management staff. It is then approved by the concerned authority like director general/director/Secretary/superintendents or governing body.

### **What is a Scope of Collections Statement?**

A Scope of Collections Statement is a comprehensive collection plan which specifically defines the types of objects a unit collects and why it does so. It describes what the collection includes, what to add, what not to add, and what may need to be removed from the collection.

### **Scope of Collection Statement**

It includes the following sections:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Executive summary about the Museum
- Brief summary of the collection
- Declaration of the purpose of the section
- Major interpretive themes, topics and/or time periods of the collection like cultural groups represented, geographical boundaries, notable people, historic events etc.
- History of the Collections
- Collection contents summary
- Use of collection
- Relationship with other related museum nearby

- Collection development goals – recommended acquisitions, de-accessions and transfers
- Collections management goals—cataloging and documentation, conservation, security, environmental conditions, storage
- Additional planning documents used—General Plan(s), Exhibit plan(s) Furnishing plan(s), Resource management plan(s) etc.
- People consulted —includes current staff, former staff, volunteers, consultants/experts etc.
- Conclusion

## **5. Functions of Museum**

Museum is the public service organisation and deals mainly with objects—its exhibition and visitors. It has some responsibilities towards the objects and society and thus, performs manifold activities on regular basis. Image and popularity of a museum depends upon its public friendly approaches, entertainment, amusement facilities in addition to its contribution towards research and education. Here are the lists below about the various functions of a museum, which may vary from one museum to other according to the nature of collection.

### **5.1. Collection:**

Most important function of a museum is to collect objects of heritage since it is a custodian of the heritage of society or country. Every museum collects following its policies related to collection management through various modes like, purchase, gift, loan, exchange, exploration, excavation, Treasure Trove Act, gift, bequest etc. Each museum authority adopts and publishes a written statement of its collection policy. Collection in museum, thus, depends upon the mission, vision and objectives of the museum and also on the needs of research, education, conservation, presentation of evidences of natural and cultural heritage. A museum must not collect anything that is theft, smuggled or very much fragile.

### **5.2. Storage**

Whatever a museum collects, need to store scientifically in a well planned and secured area. It is an important function of all museums because only one-third of collection usually displayed, rest two-third remains within the stores. So, museum must have a good storage of its collection for the reserved collection separated for organic-inorganic objects, paintings, textiles, sculptures etc. It should be regularly supervise to keep clean, control from humidity, light effects, pest and other bio-chemical and natural hazards or disasters.

### **5.3. Preservation and Conservation**

Objects need regular care because every object is subject to deterioration due to spontaneous change in environment and subsequent physio-chemical factors. So, regular care is required in both display and storage following the preventive conservation or curative conservation wherever needed. Museum practices various preservation techniques, which are exclusively objects specific to protect them from attacks of organism like fungus, insects, rodents etc. and damage from humidity, temperature and light sources and intensities.

### **5.4. Documentation**

Documentation is the process of preparing record of collected objects by formal entry in the Entry Register, accessioning, cataloguing and indexing with photo-images. It is considered

as one of the main administrative function of any museum. It is very important to document objects with authentic information after necessary research and consultation. It facilitates in knowing the provenance, identification, composition and necessary treatment of objects. Now various software of international standard is available to document museum objects digitally and to keep record not only for museum itself but as an online resource to know about a country's possession.

### **5.5. Research**

Museum is the custodian of the evidences of country's heritage. For keeping and dissemination of information regarding each object, every museum needs to research on those particular objects. It is also required to preserve and publish such information for the use of museum itself while documentation and displaying objects, and also to serve research scholars. Research scholars in the field of history or heritage need to consult various museum objects and thus, museum needs to research to keep ready reference.

### **5.6. Exhibition**

Museum is established for exhibition of objects too, apart from collection and preservation. It is an important function of any museum and every museum exhibits objects by forming permanent galleries or organising temporary exhibitions. Museums sometimes send their objects on a mobile exhibition through its museo-bus to reach people at distant locations and also send objects for exhibition at a museum situated in other cities or countries as travelling exhibition.

### **5.7. Security**

Museum collects and stores antique and precious objects or piece of art which are priceless. So, strong security system needs to develop by museum against vandalism, fire, theft, burglary and natural disaster. Sometimes two-three tiers of security system is followed in museum both in galleries and stores using latest equipments, alarms, close circuit television (CCTV) under the supervision of experienced security force and disaster management team.

### **5.8. Education and Knowledge dissemination**

Museum at the time of its inception in 3<sup>rd</sup> BCE in Alexandria was a place for philosophic discussion. Since then it remains the place for knowledge dissemination on the subjects it is established for. Even in modern time people visit museum to see the wonders and get knowledge on it. It supports people as an informal education center for disseminating knowledge on art, history, science and technology through the material and non material evidences. So, it is another important function of a museum to develop itself in such a way that it can serve society through knowledge dissemination.

### **5.9. Publication**

Museum publishes many popular literatures for visitors like leaflets, folders, posters, guide books etc. Catalogues on specific museum collection, journals, art albums, monographs etc. are published by museums, which are useful for scholars. Museum also publishes bulletins, newsletters, annual reports etc. that highlights annual activities and administrative details about the museum. It is the important activity of any museum and help visitors, scholars and officials to know more about a museum.

### **5.10. Public Services or Organising Activities**

Museum apart from exhibition also organizes various activities for the service of society, targeting specific group of visitors as its calendar events. Science centers and museums run daily shows on relevant subjects that add knowledge to visitors on the various areas of science and technologies in addition to the static exhibitions. This kind of show attracts lot of visitors into the museum or centre for enjoyment and entertainment too. Like, Science City and Birla Industrial and Technological Museum in Kolkata. It also encourage repeat visit of visitors being a popular tourists destination. Apart from the science centers and museums, museums on art and history are now also showing videos and documentaries in its audio-visual rooms. Like, Kolkata Police Museum shows a documentary on the history of Kolkata Police in its audio-visual room in every half-an hour during the museum days.

Museums also organizes several workshops, cultural programmes, activities like sit and draw, quiz, model making, paintings and many innovative activities targeting schools students, orphans, women or interested group etc. where they get entertainment and knowledge and also get a chance to know more about heritage looking at the real evidences.

### **5.11. Outreach Activities or Community Service**

Now, museums are more concerned about serving its community through its outreach initiatives in many innovative ways and taking it as one of its priority of work. In this purposes museums send their museo-bus to remote locations to show mobile exhibitions on a particular theme to aware people either on a relevant subject or on the natural and cultural heritage of the locality or country. Museums are also coming forward to assist women of self help group and artist community in promoting the folk art and craft making to sustain the indigenous art forms in this era of modern technologies. Museums are also coming out of its in-house operation and visiting the fields, meeting artists, common folks of rural areas and taking initiatives in preserving the intangible heritage like folklores, folk tales, folk dances, folk songs etc. Bharat Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur Rajasthan and Gurusaday Museum, in Kolkata are the two museums which work on preserving the rural folk culture.

### **5.12. Lecture, Seminar, Workshops**

Museums also organise lectures, seminars and workshops where they invite eminent experts to share his/her opinion in the field of heritage and culture or on a specific subject area concerned with the museum. These are the scholarly activities of a museum that helps museum professional to enhance their work potential and the research and development of the museum. It is also the initiative of museum where the experts and researchers shares their findings to each other that foster the gross knowledge base within the research community.

## **6. Conclusion**

Now, museum means an organisation that stores objects of both natural and cultural heritage, cares and provides necessary conservation supports required to objects in both display and storage and exhibits objects for the knowledge of common people. Museum professionals develop scope of work related to collection and service to the community and functions accordingly to fulfill its mission and vision. It is now more a service provider rather than a static display house.