

A case study on Pan –Indian Tribal Museum of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak

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Abstract: Museum is an Institution which performs many functions such as collection, preservation, exhibition and interpretation of natural as well as cultural objects. The ethnic heritage of our country has been under constant threats by natural and artificial hazards, urbanization, industrialization, interference of western culture etc. It is a fact that, museums owe a responsibility of protection of cultural heritage through various ways. The Pan-Indian tribal museum of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University was collected more than 1000 objects from Central India. In this article a brief note on the collection of the museum is discussed.

Keywords: Pan-India, tribal, ethnographic, museum, collection, artifacts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Heritage has been described by Germaine Greer as the cultural expression of what makes us, what we are; our Spiritual DNA. Indian is a country with rich natural traditions spanning over five thousand years. People belonging to different region, race, caste, class, tribe etc. have their own cultural traditions for which they are known for. Central India in general and the state of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in particular, where majority of tribal people are residing are considered as the treasury of the tribal cultural heritage. They do have their own way of socio-cultural life. Most of the cases, with or without slight similar, their mode of subsistence, language, food habit, material culture, dress and ornaments, songs and dance vary from one to another. Since the time of the British Empire, several scholars, both from the inland and abroad have worked on different aspects of their life and culture. Some of the major works reflecting the rich tribal culture heritage of central India includes Basa *et.al.* (2008), Edward (1970), Elwin (1943, 1947, 1949, 1955, 1986), Fuchs (1968), Fürer-Haimendorf (1948), Griffith (1946), Grigson (1938), Jay (1970), Kaufmann (1961:1-9), Knight (1983), Mazumdar (1927), Mehta (1984), Shah (1996), Sharma (1995), Singh (1944), Thusu (1980), Tiwari (2006), Tiwari (1997), Verma (1990) etc. Comparisons of these works, done in time and space, indicates about the fast change in their material culture. Modernization, Sanskritization and Industrialization could be the major factors for these changes (Sharma 1995, Verma 1990).

Today, to present the picture of the culture of a nation, anthropological/ethnographical museums are considered as one of the best media. The role of anthropological/ethnographical museums in India in presenting the unity and diversity of Indian cultures is more significant. The importance of ethnographic museum in India has been enhanced to a great extent after the independence of the Country. Both state and central Government came forward for the development of museums of India. In 1948, a separate anthropological section was started in the Junagadh museum. In 1956, a separate ethnographical museum was established in Shilling as the central museum NEFA. Various governmental and non-governmental agencies like the museums, research institutes; universities are some of the major attempt to preserve these vanishing cultural heritages. The attempt of the Museum of the Bihar Tribal Welfare Research Institute, Ranchi (1954), Museum of the Cultural Research Institute (1955), Tribal research Institute Museum, Bhubaneswar(1953), Shri Badal Bhoi State Tribal Museum, Chhindwada(1954), Anthropology Museum, University of Calcutta (1920), Anthropology Museum, Delhi University (1947), Anthropology Museum, Gauhati University (1956), Anthropology Museum, Lucknow University (1950), Anthropology Museum, Panjab University (1960), Anthropology Museum, Utkal University (1958), Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (The Museum of Mankind), Bhopal; Tribal Museum, Bhopal; Tribal Research Institute Museum, Bhopal; Zonal Anthropological Museum, Jagdalpur, Raipur Museum etc. to collect and conserve the traditional material remains of different tribal groups of the region are very important to preserve the vanishing tribal cultural heritages of central India.

In this regard, it is important to note that whatever reports are available on these material cultures of the central Indian tribes, these are mainly the collection of institutional /organizational level. Private or personal collections of ethnographic objects are very rarely available from central India. Even if there are some collection, but these are either simply dumped at the corner of the house or away from the general public. In this paper an attempt has been made to provide a preliminary report on such kind of personal collection of Dr. H.M. Sharda of Bhopal, which is very important in the history of the ethnographic museum of central India.

II. BACKGROUND

To fulfill the objectives of the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak an Ethnographic museum was established in the year 2010. From the beginning the museum was attached with the department of Sociology and Social Anthropology. About 200 objects collected by the students under the leadership of Dr. Basanta Kumar Mohanta through field work from Amarkantak region.

In 2016, Dr. H.M. Sharda, retired Bank officer living in at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh has interested to donate his entire collection to Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak. He is an art lover who cares hundreds of objects from last 40 years. He collected more than 600 hundred objects from different parts of Central India during his service period in Chhattisgarh from 1978-84 *i.e.* Bastar, Raigarh, Balodabazar, Ambikapur, Narayanpur, Jagadalpur, Kondagaon, Sarguja, Jashpur, Jhabua, Hosangabad etc. Besides, he also has collected some objects from abroad like Holland, England, Poland, Turkey, Greece, Kenya, Nigeria, and Israel. The author become astonished and spellbound after seeing the variety of objects and maintenance of the huge collection during his first visit to this art lover Dr. H.M. Sharda in the month of October 2016. With the special interest of Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Prof. T.V. Kattimani, the author and Dr. Saurabh Kumar has documented all the objects and bring it to the University. Prof. Prasanna Ku. Samal, Dean, Tribal Studies take initiative to rename of the existing Museum as Pan-Indian Tribal Museum. On 15th September, 2017, the new museum Pan-Indian Tribal Museum was inaugurated by Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor Prof. T.V.Kattimani in the presence of Prof. K.K. Mishra, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Utkal University of Culture, Prof. N.R.Shah, Retired. Professor, Department of Museology, M.S. University, Baroda, Prof. Prasanna K. Samal, Dean Tribal Studies, Directors, Deans, Professors and other officials of our University. At present the museum is attached with the Department of Tribal Studies.



Display of Objects

At present the museum has five galleries viz.- Gallery No-1(Art & Craft, Ornaments), Gallery No. 2 (Musical Instruments, Hunting & Fishing Implements), Gallery No. 3 (House Hold objects), Gallery No. 4 (Agricultural Equipment) and Gallery No. 5 (Objects from Abroad). Based on the types, functions, materials used, Dr. H.M. Sharda broadly categorized the collected ethnographic objects as Household artifacts, Basketry, Bamboo / Wood Craft, Hunting Implements and Weapons, Fishing Implements, Agriculture Implements, Earthen and Terracotta, Personal Care, Dress and Ornaments, Musical Instruments etc. A brief description of all these categories is given below.

Gallery No.1

Personal Care, Dress and Ornaments

Since very beginning, the rural and tribal folks of Central India are fond of their personal care, dress and ornaments. These ornaments are one of the most common and oldest ways of personal adornments. The practice of wearing ornaments may go back up to the prehistoric times, when our palaeo denizens were residing in rock shelter and depending upon the hunting-gathering economy. During that time, some bones of the animal, birds and fishes as well as shells and horns or ivory were used directly or prepared ornaments from these. Besides, leaves and flowers of different plants were also used for body decorations. The use of these types of ornaments is still in practice in some tribal communities. The tribal women folks beautify themselves with colourful dresses, ribbons and different types of ornaments made of iron, silver, copper, bronze, aluminum, plastic, terracotta, wood, grass and feathers. The tribal women try to adorn themselves as per their capacity and requirements. The common reasons behind this ornamentation are related to the customs and traditions of the respective tribe or communities. It is believed that these adornments protect themselves from evil spirits, to improve personal appearances, to show the socio-economic position and to attract opposite sex. Although, the traditional customs of these people have undergone a heavy change but still some tribal and non-tribal people

are using their traditional dresses and ornaments to decorate themselves during different festive occasions and social gatherings.

The collection includes head lock or hair pin as head ornaments; *kanphool* as ear ornaments; *nathuni* (nose ring), *laung* (nose pin) as nose ornaments; *haar*, *sutiya* (neck band), *havel* (string of silver coins), *munga* (necklace of red beads) etc as neck ornaments; *gajara*, *kada-batla*, *pichheli*, *kangan*, *banhuta* (broad silver bangles), *bajuband* (armlet), *bakura* etc as wrist and arm ornaments; *chhalla*, *mundri* or *aanguthi* (ring) as finger ornaments; *kandora*, *kardhani* (silver belt) as waist ornaments; *todar*, *pairi*, *jhabia*, *jhanjar*, *payal*, *jutia* as anklet and *bhichhiya* as toe fingers ornaments. Except these one special collection is total set of dancing costumes (made up of cowri) of Yadav community used in deepavali festival. Other collections are vermilion pot, Kajal dani, ornament box etc.

Earthen and Terracotta

Terracotta is one of the major craft objects which represent the life, culture and economy of a community. During early days, the earthen pots, utensils as well as other terracotta objects were widely used domestic as well as ritualistic purposes. In houses, these earthen materials were used to cook foods, store grains and liquids and other materials. Terracotta horse and other animal figurines were offered to deities. The representation of terracotta materials in this collection is very rich. The major collection of earthen and terracotta specimens includes, terracotta horse, elephants, tigers, toys, vase, lid, human figurines, lamp stand, lamp, miniature pots, cups, decorative pieces, A standing image of a beautiful lady holding a decorative pot on her head is very unique of its collection.

Miscellaneous

The collection containing miscellaneous specimens like cap (made up of bamboo strips), *dhokra* art, tribal Gods and Goddesses of Bastar region, Stone objects, decorative ornaments for bullock (made up of cowry and stone).



Photograph of Gallery No.1



Photograph of Gallery No.2

Gallery No. 2

Hunting Implements and Weapons

Hunting is one of the primitive forms of subsistence which continues since the beginning of human culture and could be traced back up to the lower palaeolithic period. During that time man was a hunter-gatherer and completely depending upon his surrounding ecology. On the basis of the nature of hunting it can be broadly subdivided into following types, *i.e.* hunting by traps, hunting by engaging tamed animals and hunting by poisoning. The collection includes hunting implements like bow(*dhanus*) and arrow (*teer*), battle axe, *khanjar* and bird catcher trap etc., which are made of wood, bamboo, iron, and threads. Displayed arrows are of both blunted and pointed headed. The blunted head are made of wood and the pointed end is made of iron. The battle axe, *khanjar* are of differ shapes having a long wooden handle. Except these snare for catching rabbit (*khargosh phanda*), catapult (*gulla*), snake spear (*sandhi*), trapping deer net (*bagur*) etc. are displayed in gallery no.2.

Fishing Implements

Fishing is one of the subsidiary economies of the rural folks of the region. For fishing different types of fishing gears, traps and nets are used. It includes some fishing traps of different shapes and sizes and is of used for catching fishes of different sizes. Some fishing traps are round and some are rectangular in shapes. These are made of thin bamboo splits with a support of long bamboo flakes. Some fishing traps contains entrance hole at its one side where as some possesses it at its both sides *i.e.* fish trap (*jhimor*, *koini*), fishing net (*jal*, *heluka*, *lawar*), fishing hook (*bansi*) etc.

Basketry

Basket plays a major role for keeping or storing various kinds of household objects and grains of a villager. Hence, it has an important place in the material culture of a tribal or rural people. Each and every rural house has baskets. Apart from the storing things, the baskets are also used for carrying, winnowing etc. this collection having baskets for storing grains and keeping some items. The collection includes different size of baskets, winnowing tray (*suppa*) etc.

Musical Instruments

Music plays an important role in the life and culture of the tribal and rural folks. After exhausting from a day long hard work, usually they play different types of their traditional musical instruments, sing and dance at evening in a dormitory or a club house or at any common place to relax themselves from tiredness. Besides, the use of these musical instruments is seen during different festivals and socio- religious gatherings. On the basis of their use, these musical instruments can be grouped into drum instrument, percussion instrument, string instruments etc. Presently, the partial use of modern musical instruments along with their traditional musical instruments is also evident. The collection includes some traditional musical instruments like, *mader*, *mridang*, *nagara*, *taali*, *basuri*, *diggi*, *damru*, *daphali*. These musical instruments are made of wood, earth and hide of animals. Most of the drum instruments are made of wood and a membrane of goat, cow or other animal skin is stretched across the rim of the hollow drum and tied with leather thread. The body of some of the drum instruments like, *mridang*, are made of clay and covered with a hide of animal.

Gallery No. – 3

Household artifacts

Specimen of household artifacts of this collection narrates about the use of different traditional materials for various household activities. These household materials are usually made of wood, bamboo, terracotta, iron and other materials. The collected and displayed specimen of household objects includes hand fan, reading stand, glass, pots, iron measuring weigh(*baant*), wooden measuring pots (*kudo/paila*), wooden pot, metallic utensils, lamp (*Deepak*) & lamp stand, ornament box, ash tray, *chillam*, nut cutter, cotton container, water container, fish container, walking stick, cap, broom stick (*jhadu*), string cot (*khatiya*), string stool (*machiya*), wooden stool (*pidhawa*), grinder (*Chakia*), Pestle (*mushor*), gourd container (*thumdi*), liquor container (*khurahi*), wooden hammer (*hathoda*), clay bin (*kuthala*), wooden hanger (*tangini*), komod(*sikka-joti*), pot rest, vegetable cutter (*pasul*), oil expelling device (*tirahi*), animal feeding container (*dongi*)etc.



Photograph of Gallery No.3



Photograph of Gallery No.4

Gallery No.4

Agricultural equipment

The tribal people of central India use different types of traditional agricultural implements as per their requirements from time to time. These agricultural instruments are made of wood and iron or both. Some of the agricultural implements are prepared by themselves and some are purchased from local specialist craftsman. The important specimens relating to agriculture includes plough (*nagar*), yoke (*juanri*), share, land leveling plough (*datari*), land leveler (*thangra*), spade, chain, digging stick (*khaluwa*), wooden nails, straw carrier, grain dropper (*paila*), paddy straw separator (*kureli*, *kalari*), sickle (*hansia*) etc.



Photograph of Gallery No.5



Gallery No. 5 Wood Craft

The wooden craft of this collection includes the locally used craft objects of the region. The important collection of this wooden craft object includes combs, elephants, rhinoceros, deer, human figurines etc. Most the collection is curved on a single piece of wood. Some of the specimens are fixed on a pedestal made of a flat piece of wood.

Masks

Three sets of wooden mask figurine, painted with brown, black, and red colours.

Miscellaneous

The collection containing miscellaneous specimens like lamp, comb, *khanjar*, painting, chess board, showpieces, neck ornament (made from Camel teeth), glasses, walking stick, stone and metal objects etc.

III. CONCLUSION

The Pan-Indian tribal museum is a center for collection, preservation, study and exhibition of fast vanishing ethnic heritage. It is a place, where a visitor can easily understand the ethnic/folk culture and their livelihood. The role of this museum is very important for education and preservation of culture. Now-a-days, in global level people are very much aware about the importance of the cultural heritage in their life. They are giving more attention to conserve the materials remain of their forefathers and feeling proud of it. Some people are also collecting the used and unused materials of their locality, which helps to understand the ancient culture of that particular locality or group. The attempt of Pan-Indian Tribal Museum for collecting such kinds of tribal objects from different parts of India. At present, the museum collected more than 1000 objects used by the numerous tribal and surrounding non-tribal groups of central India which were used for the various purposes. This collection gives a new light to the central Indian museology. It helps to describe the potential rich tribal cultural heritage of the region as well as creates awareness about the conservation of such object for the future generations.

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