

CHENNAI MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT

The Chennai Museum is the second oldest museum in India. It was established by 1851. It houses objects of historical importance. The Museum consists of six galleries. The objects displayed in the museum cover a variety of artifacts and objects covering diverse fields including archaeology, numismatics, zoology, natural history, sculptures, palm-leaf manuscripts and Amravati paintings.

KEYWORDS: Artifacts, objects, art, chennai museum, galleries etc

INTRODUCTION

Museum -An institution that cares for conserving a collection of artifacts and other objects of scientific, artistic, cultural, or historical importance and makes them available for public viewing. Museums have varying aims, ranging from serving researchers and specialists to serving the general public. Museum is "collection of collections".

OBJECTIVES

This journal deals with the information, about Chennai Museum. Various information about the arts, artifacts, antiquities. The project also gives information about the historical data of Chennai Museum. All the necessary details for a tourist who would like to visit Chennai Museum are clearly described. The rich cultural heritage is explained to enable or to understand more about the state's importance.

TOURISM AND MUSEUM

Tourism covers all those aspects of travel where by people learn about each other ways of life and thought. Personal and international contact has always been an important way of spreading ideas about other cultures. Tourism promotes cultural relations and international co-operation. The food, drinks, hospitality, craft products and other aspects of a nation's life appeal to travelers and visitors.

Cultural tourism is characterized by a sense of motivation such as the desire to learn and study in a centre famous for its high standard of living and teaching, to study about the habits institutions and the life of foreign people, to visit historical monuments, art galleries, religious centers to participate in art festivals and celebrations take part in Music, Theatre, Dance, folklore, festivals etc.

CHENNAI MUSEUM

The Museum, established in 1851 is also known as the Government Museum. The museum is the second oldest museum in India. The chennai museum particularly rich in archaeological and numismatic collections. The buildings within the Museum campus are over 100 years old. Among them, the colossal Museum Theatre is one of the most impressive. The National Art Gallery is also present in the museum premises built in Indo-Saracenic style. The museum is located in the Pantheon complex, or "Public Assembly Rooms." It is located on the Pantheon Road in Egmore. The road on which the museum is located too takes its name from the complex.

THE MUSEUM COMPLEX

The museum complex consists of six buildings and 46 galleries covers an area of around 16.25 acres (66,000 m²) of land. The objects displayed in the museum cover a variety of artifacts and objects covering diverse fields. The main museum entrance gate on Pantheon Road, located close to the Museum Theatre were the rare specimen of the Italianate style of architecture, inspired by Classical architecture and developed in 1802 at Britain by John Nash. The theatre was built by the British in the late 19th century. The structure has a high plinth and is accessed through a tall flight of stairs. It is primarily a semicircular structure with a rectangular wing at the rear. The latter wing at present houses some of the galleries of the museum. The main hall is accessed through a verandah with a row of columns linked by semicircular arches. The walls and columns are embellished with

floral and geometric designs. It has around 600 seats and a commodious stage and the actors' dressing rooms adjoin this stage. During the British era, the theatre was mainly used for staging English plays preferred by the British elite of the city. At present, the museum has been using the theatre for its own cultural and academic programs such as art workshops, lectures and conferences. It also rents the hall for various cultural performances, mainly dramas. The hall has witnessed several plays including those of Shakespeare.

HISTORY

The proposal for a museum in Chennai was mooted by the Madras Literary Society in 1846 AD and Sir Henry Pottinger, the then Governor, obtained the sanction of the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London. In January 1851 AD, Dr. Edward Balfour, Medical Officer of the Governor's Body guard was appointed as the First Officer in charge of the Government Museum. The Government Museum otherwise called as the Central Museum, was started in the College of Fort St. George, in the premises of the present office of the Director of Public Instruction, on College Road. The college of Fort St. George had been established in 1812 AD and made a significant contribution to the development of South Indian Languages. The Museum was started in the first floor of the college with the 1100 geological specimens of the Madras Literary Society. It steadily developed and expanded under the guidance and supervision of successful directors. As the building was in a dilapidated condition, the then Museum's Superintendent, Dr. Balfour shifted it to another building. In December 1854 AD, it was shifted to a building named the Pantheon, also known as the Public Rooms or Assembly Rooms, where the elite of the city met.

The estate of the Pantheon was the property of Hall Plumer, civil servant and public works contractor who subsequently, in 1793 AD, assigned the grounds to a Committee of 24 members, which regulated the public amusements in the city at that time. In 1821 AD, the Committee sold the main house and central garden space to E.S. Moorat, a wealthy Armenian merchant, who in turn, sold it back to the British Government in 1830 AD.

The Museum celebrated its Centenary on November 27, 1951 AD which was inaugurated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In Order to display the exquisite rich collection of bronzes, a separate building was constructed in 1963 AD. In the same year, a new block was added to the Chemical Conservation Section to cope with the increasing work of preservation. A new building for the Birds Gallery was also opened in 1963 AD.

A separate building for Contemporary Art was opened in January 25, 1984 AD and a new Children's Museum building was opened in April 1988 AD. The Raja Ravi Varma paintings, which are considered as National Treasures, have been placed in a gallery with Fibre Optic lighting. This system of lighting gives a dramatic lighting effect. The Contemporary Art Gallery has been lit using Dichroic Halogen lamps. These lamps reflect back the heat. They also have a pleasing visual effect. These lighting methods are technology demonstrators and a first for museums in India at the time of their installation in 2001 AD.

GALLERIES OF CHENNAI MUSEUM

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Archaeology section highlights South Indian sculptures and bronzes which would reflect the high proficiency in carving and casting technology of ancient years. The Archaeology section of the museum is primarily concerned with acquisition, preservation and display of antiquities and allied objects pertaining to the various period of South Indian history.

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Anthropology Section helps to understand the origin of human culture in South India and the customs and manners of South Indian tribes and its evolution into the present stylized forms. In 1878, Surgeon General G.Biddie, the then Superintendent of the Museum made Ethnology as a museum subject, illustrated by prehistoric antiquities and ethnographic materials. World famous collections of stone tools, ancient pottery, implements, weapons and ornaments throw light in understanding the culture of South Indians. And consequently, the Government Museum, Chennai is marked as the 'Cradle of Anthropology' of Indian sub-continent.

ARTS

The Art Section tries to reflect the changing trends of painting starting from the period of the Mughals, the adaptation of Western oil on canvas painting technique by Raja Ravi Varma in 19th Century to the present Era. The Government Museum, Chennai has a good collection of paintings and sculptures, both traditional and modern. Interesting traditional paintings of Tanjore, Rajput, Mughal, Kangra, Deccani schools and modern paintings in oil, Tepera, Water Colour, Graphics and Acrylic mediums are in the collection. Graphics and modern style metal sculptures are also in the collections.

NUMISMATICS AND PHILATELY

Numismatics is the study of coins. Many facts connected with administration, historical geography and religious history of ancient India are revealed to us by the Numismatics. The Numismatic Section in Government Museum with its huge collections of coins, philatelic materials and documents aims to understand culture, history and technology of India and their relationship with the outside world. The Museum has a rich collection of the ancient, medieval and modern Indian coins of gold, silver, copper and lead. Besides these, there is a representative collection of foreign coinage.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The Children's Museum aims to encourage children to touch and feel the exhibits in order to help them understand their heritage and to develop scientific temper. The Children's Museum is a place of wonder for children, which takes them from the land of books to the land of objects. It encourages a child to probe new horizons. It directs the children into constructive and worthwhile pastimes. Besides the galleries and parks, life size fiber glass models of Tyrannosaurus and Stegosaurus in front of this building are added attractions to the Children's Museum.

BOTANY

The Botany Section exhibits the existing flora of South India with a special emphasis on commercial botany. The importance of plants in day to day life is known, as most of the things that man needs have got their origin in some plant or the other. About thousand specimens inclusive of wet specimens, herbaria, line drawing are on display. Of the five hundreded specimens on display, the Sandalwood Skeleton, Bamboo specimens, Gums and resins, Textile blocks showing the floral depictions are some of the noteworthy and interesting exhibits.

ZOOLOGY

The Zoology Section with stuffed birds and animals in well designed dioramas helps in the comparative study of South Indian fauna with those of other countries. The Zoology Section is one of the biggest Sections of the Museum. The gallery is about 25,000 square feet area, which comprises from lower invertebrates to advanced chordates. More than 300 specimens comprising wet and dry specimens are on display in the Zoology Galleries.

GEOLOGY

The Geology Section tries to present the richness of South Indian rock formations and mineral varieties and informs the ways they are formed, their scientific exploitations and their effects on ecology. It was started only with the Geological Collections in the year 1851 C.E.

The Madras Literary Society, a branch of the Asiatic Society of London, desired to have a Museum of Economic Geology at Madras and began collecting Geological specimens. Since then, the geological galleries have been considerably improved, reorganized and modernized. The Geological gallery is a veritable treasure house of Indian minerals and has been rearranged so as to present to the visitors a fairly complete picture of stratigraphy and the range and variety of mineral wealth of India.

CONCLUSION

The Chennai Museum, has obtained a place of great importance in the modern world due to the fact that it has become more and more conscious of its responsibility towards various categories of visitors who come for recreation and education. The very purpose of the existence of a museum is education mixed with enjoyment.

The Government Museum is a center for education and scholarly research, which plays active role in contributing to the enjoyment for public and it, covers all the important aspects of the cultural and intellectual life of society.

It is classified as a multipurpose museum and is incidentally the second largest Museum in India. It is one of the largest and oldest State owned Museums in India. Established as the Museum of Practical Geology, in 1851 the Madras Central Museum (Government Museum) at present has different Sections like Archaeology, Art, Anthropology, Numismatics, Philately, Zoology, Botany, Geology and Children's Museum. In addition to these there is well equipped Chemical Laboratory for the conservation of museum objects, an Education Section for carrying out the educational activities and a Design and Display Section for organizing the display work of the Museum. These Galleries contain extensive collections illustrating mostly the past history, culture and natural history of South India and thus helps to preserve our rich cultural heritage by way of exhibiting them. The rapid cultural consciousness amongst the people is instrumental in bringing public to this Chennai Museum.

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