

**A
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM
FOR INDIA**

by

Dr. PRABHA SAHASRABUDHE

B.Sc., G.D., M.A., Ed.D. (New York University)

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BAL BHAVAN & NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MUSEUM,

NEW DELHI.



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DEPARTMENT OF MUSEOLOGY

Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University of Baroda

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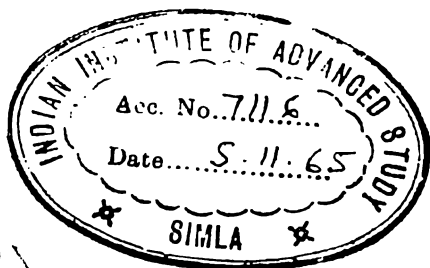
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PREFACE

Perhaps it may not be merely a matter of coincidence that the publication of this brochure by Dr. Sahasrabudhe, Director, Bal Bhavan and the National Children's Museum, New Delhi, should follow the holding of a special seminar on 'Children's Museums,' by the Museums Association of India, at Patna, on 10th December, 1964. While in the past, the needs of children were never lost sight of by our museums, it is only very recently that special attention is being paid to the problems and possibilities of serving them in and through museums. It has been realized that the requirements of this class of young public are unique and the methods followed in serving the adult public have to be modified or even discarded in fulfilling the expectations of the young minds. While much in this direction has been achieved in the progressive countries, we, in India, have yet to evolve such methods as will be most effective and appropriate in the context of our own conditions. The problem is receiving serious attention of a number of museum experts and it is hoped that their quest will help in finding out a well thought out plan and policy to accelerate the pace of the development of the Children's Museums or for that reason any museum work for children. In view of this, the significance of the ideas expressed in this brochure by a very competent and qualified Museologist as Dr. Sahasrabudhe will be appreciated by all those who are interested in the museum's work for children.

V. H. BEDEKAR

BARODA,
15th February, 1965

Head,
Department of Museology.

A CHILDREN'S MUSEUM FOR INDIA:

ITS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS CHILDREN AND TOWARDS EDUCATION*

It may be considered very conservative and orthodox a manner to begin with a definition, but in the context of my subject I do consider this to be an absolute necessity beginning with a definition I mean.

I can hear some my American colleagues of late expressing "Oh you, and your *penchant* for definition!". My pet answer to them used to be, and still is, I want to be understood, understood in a fashion where others will have no room to say that I have my own meanings attached to the terms I use.

Besides this personal need to be understood, is my need to be quite clear in my own mind about the project I have undertaken. I have been thinking, studying, planning a Children's Museum to suit Indian conditions for the last few years and today I feel confident to put forth this effort in shape of, not too concise, a definition.

We must be aware that we are attempting to transplant a foreign concept, an American institution, that has

* Lecture delivered at Department of Museology, M. S. University of Baroda on 14th of September, 1962.

come to mean what it does under situations and circumstances peculiar to the American Society, and very different from conditions at home. Therefore, it is our professional obligation to make clear to ourselves what this concept, this concept of children's museum would and should mean to us; what shape must a children's museum take, given a situation that is typically Indian.

Terms such as art, education, museum, are not really "straightline" terms that can be defined by words that need no further definition. They can only be defined as complex concepts, and as such are open to all sorts of misinterpretations and spurious meanings. It is, I suppose, our responsibility, the responsibility of the profession of museologists to define and thereby set standards for such institutions. Of course, we cannot stop people in a democracy, particularly a democracy populated by a majority of illiterate adults, from using terms like museum, and schools, for all kinds of institutions. I have recently within the last few months come across a shoes museum, and a photography museum which are nothing more than a shoe store and a photo-studio. Every toy today is called an educational toy, all "juvenile" literature is sold as literature for juveniles, for the young. Of course, the classical paradox is the so-called *unrecognized school*, schools that governmental authority does not recognize as schools yet they exist. However this is besides the point.

A definition then, is necessary to set some sort of standard for institutions within the profession, even

if it be simply for accrediting purposes, for the sake of the recognition by the profession and award of grants by the Government.

At this stage, at this juncture in the history of Indian Museology when one sees signs of renewed activity in this field, when it seems existing museums are enlarging their scope to include children's departments, and when newer children's museums are being established, it is pertinent that we define what we mean by a children's museum.

These two talks are then my efforts to define a children's museum as it should be recognized in India, and discuss its roles and responsibilities in the perspective of the Indian situation.

The first lecture presents a definition and attempts elucidation, clarification of this definition, sets down the ends; whereas the second will deal with the means of fulfilling the obligations of such a Institution.

This definition reads:

A Children's Museum is a permanent establishment open to all children and whose foremost loyalty is to the child and to his education, established for the purposes of:

- (i) meeting the aesthetic and educational needs of children;
- (ii) promoting and encouraging a creative, constructive-critical approach to education.
- (iii) helping to improve and to enrich the content of education of children by introducing the

real object, by exploiting the potentialities of audio visual aids in education, and

- (iv) consolidating the child's understanding of his society, of his nation, and of his world so as to foster in him a sense of values.

These are our ends,-our objectives for a Children's Museum in India.

What about the means to achieve these goals?

The Children's Museum in India should strive to do the above through:

- (i) a programme of collecting and exhibiting materials for the child, on the child and by the child;
- (ii) a programme of in-museum activities, to establish, demonstrate and maintain the creative-constructive,-critical approach to education;
- (iii) a programme of extension services for schools, and for class-room teachers to help their teaching and to promote an awareness of problems and promises of education.

In its essentials this definition can be said to be universally applicable. In fact Jane B. Cheney of Hartford Children's Museum, defines a children's museum "as one whose loyalty is and should be, to the child and one that is built and tailored to the needs of children that a sensitive director and the board of trustees feel are important and possible".

A children's institution should be loyal to the child, this no one would question. Similarly, due to the contemporary understanding of the functions of the museum, education has been universally accepted as an important function of a museum. We all agree that a museum, along with preservation of the object, study of the object, must also take responsibility for popularization of the object. Neither would any one argue against what Roberta Franscer has said, "where better than in a museum can the people be trained to sensitive responsiveness to the best that has been thought and said in the world, to some realization of their human situation and their place in history". Nor would any one question Theodore Low's statement that, "the purpose and the only purpose of the museum is education in all its varried aspects, from the most scholarly research to simple arousing of curiosity.

In this context then, a children's museum by the fact of its being a children's museum cannot be anything but loyal to its children and to education.

The inter-relationship of a museum, children and education is so integrally entwined that a children's museum without a first-hand knowledge and understanding of its children and first-rate acquaintance of the local school system and the educational process, will surely fail to cross the first hurdle.

To repeat then, a children's museum, whether in America or in India must be loyal to its children, and to education. It's only in terms of the meanings attached

to "loyalty", only in terms of the recognized dimensions of this responsibility, that one children's museum differs from another.

It is the nature of understanding that the nation possesses about its children and the degree of awareness and interest its people take in its educational structure and process that give each country its own kind of children's museum.

We in India have much more of a difficult task as compared to children's museums in America. There, children's museum came into being as the result of an educationally aware and enlightened society concerned with education of its growing generation of children. Children's museum in America came into being in an atmosphere of liberal and progressive ideas fostered by a democratic society. They could assure a readily available, relatively sound basis of educational philosophy and practice. American people can be figuratively said to live for their children.

Here, things as you know, are different. Years of servitude have made us insensitive to a large area of our needs, and the needs of our children. We know little of our children. The average amongst us is hardly interested in what goes on under the name of education. This makes it doubly important that all institutions engaged in education, recreation or welfare of children, actively concern themselves with these few important factors in the regeneration of a nation.

What do I mean by being loyal to children, and being loyal to their education?

To begin with, being loyal to a child means having faith in the child, having faith in his individuality, recognizing him as a person in his own right. To us Indians still weighted down by the ancient familial pattern, this does not come easy. We love our children, cuddle them, handle them without ever allowing them to be by themselves. In ancient India, in context of the four stages of life concept, childhood was an insignificant period. Life really began at *upnayana*, the child became a full-fledged member of the aryan family somewhere between 8-12 years of age. These first years of life, though dotted with several religious rituals and ceremonies beginning with *Barasa* and *Jawal* and *Mundan*, as if to acknowledge definitive periods of growth, were lived in God's grace, in a matter of fact manner.

Large families with a great many aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, rarely allowed a child any emotional involvement or identification with one or both of his parents. A father relegated the fatherhood to his father. The child grew up as an identity-less being, an alien in his own family. He never sought his selfhood, his individuality, as he never was given any opportunities to become a self.

This neglect of the early years of life, a total lack of opportunity for self-identity in the child's life, denial of his individuality and familial fostering of an extreme form of dependency unfortunately, is not so much of an ancient model. This family prototype still persists.

Loyalty to the child also means acceptance on the part of every worker, every institution of every child as potentially capable of reaching his own heights. In other words this means that we, those working with children have to recognize our responsibilities to plan and to organize our programmes, our environments that will help him realize the vast range of his intellectual, emotional and aesthetic faculties.

This means understanding of children, the understanding of the growth process; the understanding of their needs, their motivations, their interests, their attitudes, their capacities. In short, a thorough understanding of child psychology. A year or two of text-book child psychology is really not enough. It may take some years before every museum, every institution can have a psychologist on staff but a museum surely can begin organizing group studies on children, seminars, conferences and other programmes dedicated to "knowing" our children.

Psychology of Indian children is a vast uncharted area. There is very little truth in the saying that children are the same all over. It is true that in principle children are the same psychic quantities. Potentially they are the same. However, the familial patterns, the social structures, play a major part in the personality make-up of children. Indian children have to be studied in this respect, and a psychology of Indian children has to be developed.

Loyalty to children demands knowledge of children as they are, and not as text-books based observations

on children in other environments would portray them to be.

Children have to be understood so that we can isolate their needs, felt and unfelt needs, needs that derive out of the psychophysical nature and the needs of socio-cultural environments they live and grow in. They must be brought to the awareness of the worker, so that he can begin programming to meet such needs.

Today it is not possible for me to go into the details of needs of Indian children. But I must point out, single out one need (so as to connect my next point) that stand out most in my mind. This is the need of the Indian child for self assertion, self realization, need for individuality. This is the need on which depends the very survival of democracy. Indian familial patterns, our social structure, more often our authority ridden school atmosphere can be seen to be working directly against this need satisfaction.

Loyalty to children must be taken to mean providing them with an atmosphere where such needs can be satisfied; where the child has opportunities to explore and experience his self, where he will be allowed to identify with objects, where he will be able to assert his choices, his preferences, where experiences such as, " I did it, I made it ", will abound.

If this is to be made possible in a children's museum —this museum must necessarily become an active education centre, interested in making its effect felt in all areas of education. Not only on the curriculum, but on

methods and on materials of teaching, on quality and on content of what is taught.

From a practical point of view it can be said that when the nation's educators are busy implementing the constitutional promise of free and compulsory education for all under 14 years of age, and when the majority of the nation's resources are geared towards expansion of educational facilities, it is up to us—a few specialized institutions dedicated to children's education, to involve in experiments for quality in education. If education is one of the recently emerged, important functions of a museum, it is *the* function of a Children's Museum. We have a large contribution to make, specially when we have the most impressive tool, *the object*; and the most effective technique, *the exhibition*.

Loyalty to education—particularly in India, must mean striving for leadership in all spheres of education, aims and objectives, methods and materials, curricula and content and equipment and apparatus.

A children's museum should become a place, informal, non-official and without any pretence to becoming academic, where teachers, parents and even children discuss, experiment with, explore and study education, talk of reforms in education, involve in rethinking about current practices in education and appraisal of new trends. Newer ideas in education largely depend on the general educational awakening of the public. A children's museum with its teacher members must take a lead in this direction. In India administrators, governments are still too busy implementing plans and policies. Univer-

sities and colleges are involved in a kind of transference of things as they are. It is the lay people, teachers and parents who must begin in this direction. A children's museum can provide them a forum, a platform.

We must uphold a philosophy of education and demonstrate its effectiveness. I have proposed in the definition the need to establish and promote a creative, constructive, critical method of education. Our educational methods and materials are still largely antiquated, far moved from the real life outside the school room. For me, education in a democracy must cherish the concept of the freedom of the individual. It must be based on a faith in the child, and his potentialities. It should be child centered rather than subject centered. It must be oriented to actual needs and tendencies of the child. It must take into consideration his mental and emotional growth status. It must be education through the real environment, it should give the child an opportunity to work with real things, and above all, this education must consider the aesthetic—qualitative affairs as its central consideration.

Such education, cognizant of the individual and social needs is not conceived of as a didactic programme towards a political end. It is not preparation for life of an adult. It is helping the child to reach and respond, see and reason with life as it is. It is education that derives its strength from the real environment, from the values that society upholds.

The method of such education is the creative-constructive-critical method. Sir Herbert Read has called

this method, the method of natural wisdom; John Dewey calls it the approach of creative intelligence. It is the method that integrates intellectual, emotional, rational and intuitive, conscious and unconscious aspects of child's personality. It is the method that fosters creative intelligence, as well as aesthetic sensibility. It is the method that combines the way the artist approaches the problem with that of the scientist's way of approach. One must emphasize that creative approach is not the concern of art education only, -nor is the scientific method the prerogative of the scientist. All life must be approached creatively, dealt with in the scientific method.

When a problem is discovered, rather than presented, when a strategy is planned by the teacher (or the museum educator) where by the child stumbles on the problems, is challenged by it, when it is made possible for him to identify with it as a real problem, when he is allowed to interact and respond to it on personal grounds in the process of which he has opportunities to experience the object and the self, the " I ", where he is allowed and encouraged to intensive enquiry, where it is open to him to construct and reconstruct the problems, where he experiments and tests his approaches, where he is involved in questioning, doing, making, where he follows the problems right from the beginning to its final solution, experiences its relatedness to himself, and to his world; then, we can say that the creative constructive critical method has come into play.

This is, in essence, the method of museum education. The museum does not present a problem but the whole

exhibition is a strategy to make the child aware of a situation, a fact, a problem; realize the fact in all its facets. The real object, the real things not the second hand word or the twice removed picture allows the child to relate to the object on his own level, "it helps the child to recapture a sense of magic and of awe, at the complexity and beauty of the natural world and at the genius and skill of man". It encourages and provides for intensive experiencing on the part of "struck" children. The museum with its studios and workshops allows reconstruction, of and experimentation with the problem, by involving him in doing, making.

"A Children's Museum", as Sri A. Mitra, Registrar General of India recently said in one of his lectures "helps the educational need of a child to the extent the museum assists him to piece together the parts—and connect it with his present life and experience, the remote with everyday objects around him, man's ultimate achievements of every age to what the child is patiently, painfully trying to learn how".

I think I have said enough to emphasize a children's museum's responsibility towards children and education. I have brought to your attention the fact that a children's museum worker is more of an educator than a museologist; and that a children's museum is more of an educational. than a cultural institution. A children's museum cannot justify its reputation on its collections, on its exhibition, on its display, on its know-how of preservation, and conservation and restoration, it cannot take due pride in the scholarship of its staff members

unless all these activities are geared to leave their impress on children and hence on the existing educational system.

This is by no means a simple task. We are faced with a stupendous task which requires a very realistic approach. We cannot forget the hard facts of reality that surround children. Is it not true that quite a large portion of our children "have to do hard grinding household chores, have to go without food and clothes, that more than half of them never get into even a single-teacher school and that out of every five that do get to primary schools one gets to Class V, that books and writing materials are scarce"; this is the situation we have to deal with.

This is why we cannot remain aloof from the main current of education. Our museums cannot choose to serve only those who get there. Children will not benefit from a museum visit if that museum visit is only an extra-curricular activity apart from their school, from their life. This is what it will be if the museum introduces objects, priceless treasures only remotely connected with what their teacher talks to them about. Improvement in curricular content cannot be forced on teachers as if the museum were another education directorate. We have to instigate curricular revision through the agency of teachers that we can get interested in our activity, by demonstrating the effectiveness of such curricular changes.

Another point in this definition that remains to be explained further, is the question of values. I have said earlier that by definition, a purpose for which a children's museum is established is that of consolidating the child's

understanding of his society, of his nation, and of the world so as to foster in him a sense of values.

Values are cherished social goods, social ends. What is valuable in one's tradition, one's culture, is generically a value. Education based on the felt needs of the child must also consider the "unfelt needs", i.e. the social needs, the needs that the society wants the child to become aware of.

One might say that in India today a new culture, a new civilization is shaping up. The technological advances of the 20th century are bound to affect India and its children. Indian cultural history, its ferment of tradition and values must incorporate the 20th century in its fold. It must move on and yet it must have certain more or less fixed foundations of essentials of Indianhood.

A children's museum, as an educational institution must constantly remember and impress upon its audience the vast heritage of fundamental beliefs; belief in fluidity of India's thought, its capacity to absorb, amalgamate, synthesize newer impacts, newer elements, its spirit of tolerance and of brotherhood, while simultaneously preparing them to understand and assume the mantle of the 20th century individual.

Our children have to be faced with a statement and a restatement of what India stood for, what it stands for, not only in terms of our ancient heritage, not only in terms of political freedom, economic security and equality of opportunity but also in terms of aesthetic sensibility,

civic conscience, individual dignity and responsibility, and creativity.

After listening to this you would probably want to ask but why a museum, why must a museum do these things and in the process, lose its identity as a museum?

The answer to this is precisely why a children's Museum in India becomes a distinctive institution, one of its kind. A children's museum is an educational institution and it has to become responsible to everything that comprises education.

Today it is not necessary to reiterate the powers and potentials of audio-visual aids in education. The contact, the confrontation with the real in education has been stressed enough. We only have to quote from Comenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey, or Gandhi to make a point.

The Museum with its focus on the "real", thus becomes an excellent environment for the fullest possible realization of the promise of education. It develops skills, attitudes, and confidences necessary for engaging in creative-constructive-critical approach to life and living. It provides the individual with capacities to guard against lop-sided intellectual education.

Museum in education makes possible the attainment of one of the major objectives of modern education which is education for the integration of the intellectual with the emotional, rational with the intuitive.

A children's museum in India for the lack of such other allied educational institutions, must assume in its own humble way, responsibilities of a board of education.

concerned with problems of philosophy and policy in education, it must become a non-academic informal centre for teachers activity, it must become a resource centre for curricular materials, a cultural centre for cultural rejuvenation, and a child study centre for studies on children.

Before I close this first lecture I would like to attempt to answer two important questions: First—why a separate museum for children? The question itself is quite controversial and opinions on it are divided. On the continent of Europe the children's museum idea is not looked upon with favour. The general trend is to make adult museums available to children; as the argument goes, children's museum can never afford the priceless treasures that a major adult museum possesses, and as such, keeping children away from this vast and rich heritage cannot be justified.

Another disadvantage of children's museum, it is pointed out, is that they separate children from adults. Molly Harrison considers "the Child as a continually evolving being. . . . as such (she says) there is no place for special institutions whose content seems too inadequate for his ever-changing needs and ever-widening knowledge".

It is true that the child is a continually evolving being, and that there is enough to be gained from the contact with the adult world. But it's precisely the child's ever-changing needs, his ever-widening knowledge that demands a constant change of exhibition, gradually and continually evolving programmes. This is not possible in large adult museums, with permanent installations. As the

child grows, his needs, his behaviour, is bound to change, but does this deny that he has a nature of his own. The understandings provided by psychology cannot be neglected. Even the peripheral matters such as the child's height, his eye level, his physical stamina, his attention span, are justifications for a separate children's museum. His scale, his size cannot be neglected.

True, that children all through their life are adjusting to the adult world—they have to grow and live in it—we cannot distort and create a topsyturvy world and call it their world. All we are asking that we do in children's museums is that we make their adjustment easy without their having to face stresses and strains for which their fragile personalities are not ready.

A children's museum does not protect the child from the adult influence, does not provide a protective haven for the child away from the bad bad adult world. A children's museum presents the world to the child as is; the content is not changed, the form is modified to suit his needs, serve his interests, challenge his capacities. Children's museums need not suffer from poor presentations, inadequate display, bad collections. The ideas behind exhibits need not be watered down. Believe me a child is capable of responding to the most profound idea, the most mature thought; he is able to imbibe the most complex relationship, experience the most intricate phenomenon if only offered in format, arrangement, and in a language he is able to understand. It is not the content that has to be brought down, he does not have to be talked down to ; it's the strategy of presenta-

tion, the height of the exhibit, drama of display, amount of footwork required, spots and areas that require his fuller participation which become important in a children's museum.

Lastly, can we afford a children's museum? As some one remarked "A Children's Museum is highly desirable within a complete educational system.....aesthetic values must be infused in education. However, when the need is for elemental satisfactions like health and literacy is it a wise allocation of scant resources? One such museum as a symbol is justified—on whole sale basis it is premature, unwise planning".

I, as you have possibly gathered, disagree with such pronouncements vehemently. We cannot wait for schemes devoted to quality in education, till we can afford them. To make education through museum a possibility, especially when it is such an important and effective instrument of total education we may have to sacrifice something else. We have already waited too long—, 15 years of existence as an independent nation, —while one generation of the nation's children has already gone through schools without the benefit of a children's museum.

We have lived as a nation of clerks for long enough to realize that our educational system needs a major operation. The Children's Museum can be the required left surgeon. To survive as an independent free nation we need quality education, children's museums are such institutions dedicated to instill quality in education.

A CHILDREN'S MUSEUM:

***COLLECTIONS, EXHIBITIONS, DISPLAY, IN-MUSEUM ACTIVITIES, OUT-OF MUSEUM SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, FOR SCHOOLS, FOR TEACHERS, STAFF, BUILDING, FURNITURE, ETC.**

In my talk to you yesterday I defined a Children's Museum in terms of its roles and responsibilities towards children and education. I tried to establish, meeting aesthetic and educational needs of children, and working for an awareness of social, national values as the end purposes of a children's museum.

This, I said, the museum can achieve through:

1. a programme of collecting and exhibiting materials for the child, on the child and by the child;
2. a programme of in-museum activities to promote, establish and demonstrate creative, constructive, critical method in education; and
3. a programme of extension services for schools, and for classroom teachers to help their teaching and to promote an awareness of problems and promises of education.

* Lecture Delivered at Department of Museology, M, S. University of Baroda, Baroda. on the 15th of September, 1962.

This lecture discusses in some details, these programmes, these means to fulfil the ends set out by my definition.

Let me take these in order:

Collections and Exhibitions:

We all know that collecting, whether it is through purchase, donations, gifts, transfers, or through items made at the museum by the staff, or things collected and made by children, is a long term process. Collection is the heart of a museum, the reputation of a museum ; in fact museums have been defined as institutions that house collections, personal, communal or national ; collections of objects rare, unique and often of aesthetic value. Museum collections include cultural goods, visual records, artifacts, ornaments, and other realia of man's achievements, symbols of man's power, knowledge, his progress from the cave to the stars and (we hope, in spite of the present constant threat of nuclear extinction) not back to cave. Almost all of the major public museums of the world have grown around nuclei of individual collections. At the core, there has always been a collection that symbolized the passion for study, and knowledge of an individual or a professional society.

Indian Museum, Calcutta, was established to house many " curiosities " accumulated by donations of members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal; The Madras Literary Society was largely behind the formation of the Central museum in Madras in 1850; Victoria and Albert Museum

of Bombay originated in the collections got together in connection with the great exhibition at London in 1851. The Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, though partially supported by the city, derives its wealth from such private donors as the Havemeyers, the Altmans, the Morgans, the Bluemental and the Bache. The Boston Museum was born when the attractive paintings of the Boston Athenaeum, now the Boston Public Library, became the nucleus of its collections. Cleveland Museum owes a great deal to Leonard Hanna; the National Gallery at Washington to Andrew Mellon; Newark Museum to Joseph Dana.

If a children's museum is fortunate enough to begin with such a core collection, so far so good—however, this nucleus may, more than often not, prove to be a handicap, many a time the biggest obstruction for any kind of creative organization. What is donated or bequeathed for children may not always be particularly suitable for children and again it may be bequeathed with strings attached, strings hard to break or even un-knot.

Collection for children must not be judged in terms of the objects but only in terms of the use they can be put to in the service of children's education.

A children's museum is neither a miniature natural history museum, nor an archaeology museum, neither is it an art museum nor a science museum. It is all there, so organized so as to become a Children's Museum. There is no subjectwise limitation to what is suitable

for the child. The world may be brought into a children's museum. Its limitations are limitations of our ability or inability to use this material effectively for children.

Very little has been done or written about organization of a collection in a children's museum. Most of the museums follow the adult museum plan; arranging their collections either subject-wise—or in chronological and historical periods. A museum may have an anthropology sections, a natural history section, a science section, an archaeology section, an ethnology section, etc or may have several period rooms. I have also heard people talking of organization in terms of geographical distributions or national boundaries. All of these are traditional ways of organizing collections, or we may say, collection biased ways of organizing children's museum collections. A children's museum probably could also be organized under History of India, Geography of India, Climate of India, People of India, Animals of India, Religions of India, and such other headings.

Children's museum is so new a concept that at this stage it is better not to be over-critical of any approach to the organization of a collection for a children's museum. What should be stressed is the need to think in terms of new lines without being bogged down by what others do or have done.

I have thought of a plan for organization which though hard to work out, I believe is a sound one. I suggest that a children's museum be organized under, somewhat overlapping broad categories such as:

- The World of Man
- The World of Animals.
- The World of Art
- The World of Science
- The World of Nature
- The World of Technology and Industry
- The World of Children

Each category may have within its fold several subject-categories, for example, the World of Man may cover subjects such as: Anthropology, Archaeology, Mythology, Philosophy, Psychology, History, Economics, Civics, Languages, and on each subject we should evolve themes—collection units; on anthropology our theme could be the Story of Man; Man: How and why he needed tools, weapons, machines; People of Mohenjo Daro, Harappa; Life in Mahabharata times, etc., etc., keeping in mind children's interests, needs, the school curriculum and national and international value system. Whatever the organization, one thing is certain; children's museum must begin with a master-plan of collection and then set about collecting to fill up the requirements of such a plan.

This collection would include all kinds of objects, objects of art, national history specimens, of rocks, insects, objects of historical nature, of archaeological significance pots and pans, toys and tid bits, there is no end to what one should collect; they may be replicas, models, reproductions, photographs, paintings, pictures, maps, charts, the main consideration being that the object sought for or built in the museum, shows promise of *use* immediate or future in theme exhibits built and arranged for the education of children.

I strongly believe that permanent installations have no place in a children's museum, *i.e.* to say, no object howsoever important or beautiful in our adult judgement should be placed on a pedestal fixed in place for all time to come. In a children's museum if we are to attract the attention of the child to the same object repeatedly, that piece, that work, that object, needs to be presented in a new light, in a new setting, within a new framework of ideas every time. Permanent installations not only become static experiences, "oh, I have seen that," kind of dead spots but they also take up lot of active floor space.

The permanent part of a children's museum should be its study storage arranged visibly in "unit collections" (units that can be loaned out in entirety if need be) that is to say that even storage should be arranged in complete themes, obviously more compact and crowded than gallery exhibits but still complete in itself.

This study-storage, from which exhibits are drawn for gallery exhibits must always be open for school children of all ages.

It must be emphasized particularly in India, that a large part of our collection will originate in the museum workshop. A children's museum, or a group of children's museums will do well to establish a well staffed and well equipped workshop with modelling, model making, drawing and drafting, photography, wood work, shops and studios, as well as a small conservation—preservation laboratory.

Museums cannot and should not entirely depend on donations and gifts. Donations should not be accepted unless they are offered with no strings attached, and unless they fit in the scheme of things. Purchase of collections should still be major ways of collecting. A third of museum financial resources should be set aside for collections.

Another way of collecting would be to seek the help of teachers and schools in the locality. Quite often things made and exhibited in school rooms are worth preserving. Science Fairs, Art Workshops, Social Studies Projects are becoming popular in a number of our schools and school systems. Annual days produce lot of good materials in the form of stage sets, costumes, etc. A great deal of this material for lack of space is pushed out into the school verandah and then thrown out during the summer. Children's museums staff should be on the look out for such materials. Of course, a great care has to be taken to select the worth while from this category of available material. The Museum cannot in any sense afford to become a junkyard for the schools to unload all their trash.

Ways of collecting materials at no cost, are many but as I said before unless this is done in terms of some sort of master-plan with extreme care, and with taste, it would prove to be a waste of time and effort.

A great care must be taken that the object collected is genuine, of first quality, aesthetically beautiful and of use.

A number of our larger adult museums have a large proportion of their materials stored in their godowns. I would ask the authorities concerned to release some of their priceless and hidden treasures for the use of children on an extended loan basis. National Museum in Delhi has begun reproducing scale models of important sculpture for schools and other interested parties. It should become the responsibility of other museums to begin in this direction. It would be of great help if museums will reproduce, make replicas and models of materials and objects in their collection and make them available to school children. Now, What of Exhibitions:

A museum that plans for no permanent installation must of necessity plan its exhibitions very carefully.

I think in a children's museum there should be three kinds of exhibitions:

Those arranged for children; those arranged by children and of things collected or made by children; and then those that are arranged for greater understanding of children, for teachers, for parents and for other individuals working with children.

Exhibitions arranged for children must always be theme exhibits, story telling exhibitions. The purpose of these exhibitions being not only to help children to better understand their curricular content, but to open to them newer horizons, newer challenges.

For children, the linking of objects with objects, and objects to their lives is very important. The child's total

response has to be carefully nurtured. He will not accept, recognize a new challenge, enter unfamiliar grounds unless he is led from the familiar to the unfamiliar with warmth, affection, and understanding.

The stories told, themes unfolded must be, however, at the interest level of the child. They must make real what he knows and tell a little more than what he has already made his own. Stories must be told in his language using his vocabulary and above all the exhibitions, they must always provide a complete visual-aesthetic experience.

Some of the fascinating exhibitions for children that I have seen have been around themes such as:

1. Bugs, Bees, Birds, and Byways.
2. What was it? (with things for children to do)
3. Seeing into space.
4. Happy, Scarey and Calm.
5. Color, Color.
6. Steam Engine that refused to puff-puff.
7. Are we on the moon?
8. What did Columbus find?

Exhibitions by children of their work is a delicate area of responsibility. How many art exhibitions of children's work have you seen that show very blatantly their teachers' preferences? Then, don't we tend to show only the work of those children who are to all intent

and purposes definitely precocious, don't we usually select work for exhibitions on the basis of our biases, our prejudices? The purpose behind these exhibitions must not be to pat our own back, but to create an opportunity for the meekest child to show off. We are there to encourage the fact that he, too, has something to show and impress upon him that we will help him to show himself in the best possible manner.

Exhibitions on children are the evidences of our concern and our work towards understanding children. This is our means of presenting to the teachers and to the parents, our studies on children, for instance, their toys—not only a collection but an evaluation of toys, their good points and bad, their suitability to particular age groups what they do and do not for children, their aesthetic charm or ugliness so as to improve the toys for our children. Children's clothes, their costumes,—conditions under which they live, play, work, study are other possibilities for exhibitions. We could bring to this a comparative study of children of other nations.

Whatever the exhibitions for children, by children, or on children, we must always endeavour to do the best as regards to presentation and display—whether it be an insect, or a scroll, a sculpture or a model, or a child's collection of coins. We as museum men, must give it all we have. Children's museums are often accused of bad display. We must not be open to such accusations—whatever is necessary to enhance presentation, help communication of an experience, be it notes or sketches, back

drops, or talks, and gallery quizzes, or it must be undertaken.

The purpose of the exhibit is to evolve a genuine and significant response on the part of the child, as Cheney puts it:

“It is not so much an attempt to provide a suitable setting for a display of a Botticelli or a Brontosaurus as it is to place the child in a suitable situation to see for himself and learn to appreciate.

Exhibits meant for the child must beckon him to participate. He must be provided with opportunities to touch, to handle, to turn on a switch, to push a button; audio visual techniques such as peep holes, sound tracks, photo electric light beams add drama to the exhibit and make it very excitingly worthwhile for children.

Live animals, working models, animated and moving exhibits are always the attention getters.

Looking, of course, is important in museums but this process of looking must be helped, must be enhanced with proper lighting, illuminated spots, color and what have you. Labels are another help. They, of course, can become hinderances if not incorporated into children's looking. “Looking for things”, kinds of gallery games, help discovery and looking.

Information when presented will have to be correct, honest and in good taste. However? How much? When? and How? are questions that can be handled only in reference to an actual situation. Of the four museums W's (What, Why, Where, and When) for children *What* is most important, this is their basic ap-

proach to the world around. Only when *what* has made a lasting impression, do they begin to care for why, where, and when.

The content of our exhibitions depends on our study at careful evaluation of childrens needs, the curricular needs of the schools, needs of the teachers, and of education, and demands and values of the society to which the children belong.

School visits to the museums by groups of children should be carefully planned, thoughtfully conducted and definitely followed through. The success of an exhibit depends on a well planned and well carried out school visit.

It is not enough to simply arrange exhibits ; are must be taken to motivate the group to see, to care for what is arranged. Projection of ideas motivating receptivity on the part of children is important.

In-Museum Activities

The second means at the command of a children's museum to achieve its objectives is its programme of *in-museum activities*. Children's museum should institute a number of group activities for children. There is no limit to what can be done in this area. These activities may include organized school visits ; art studios, science clubs; dance, drama, music workshops; puppet shows; story hours; treasure hunts; quizzes; gallery games, etc., etc. It is not the *how many?* of the activities that is important but the content and quality of the activity.

No museum should take up an activity without thoroughly evaluating its own resources. A museum must assure itself that whatever it has planned to do it will do it in the best possible manner and in good taste. Museums cannot afford to simply duplicate what is happening in kindergartens, or art classes, or school science clubs. Museums must be ahead of the general level of school education and yet maintain a continuity howsoever tenuous with what is happening in the school.

The purpose behind these activities, besides opening up a new facility for children, a new opportunity for children, is to demonstrate what I have called "*creative-constructive-critical*" method of education.

The two important activities besides school visits to the museums that can be given priority are art studios and science clubs. Both of these areas in education are equally important. What is taught as art today, is far from what should be taught. Science education in our schools lags far behind contemporary schools in other countries.

The approach in these areas and for that matter in all other activities should be free of any dogma and all efforts should be made to help the child express his own ideas and his own imaginations, pursue his own interest.

The environment of these activities, studios, clubrooms, workshops must encourage freedom in the utmost sense and foster a sense of responsibility, respect for the subjects to be studied and cooperation amongst the group.

In all these activities, local teachers should be given adequate prominence because in the last analysis it is they who are responsible for the education of your children. Teachers should be welcomed to help in the in-museum activities for children.

On the other hand the museum must also plan certain in-museum services for teachers as well. Of the activities, or in-museum services offered for teachers, important ones are:

A Laboratory-Workshop for teachers to study, discuss, and experiment with methods, techniques and tools for learning. Teachers' participation in special committees on exhibition planning, in seminars on teachers' problems and conferences should be planned for. Lectures by experts in various fields of education could become a great service for them.

However, the aim of teacher activity should never be "teacher training"; in no sense can the museum assume to be in the position of teaching teachers. Teachers are to be brought in as equals, where-ever possible as experts, as advisers. The overall end is to create an interest amongst teachers in the museum offerings and help them realize their ambitions and aspirations towards the service of education.

Out-of Museum Activities

A programme of extension services is another area of out-of museum activities beyond the museum wall. For children for use in classrooms, the museum should

pian circulating exhibits on curricular units, on topics of special interest, etc.

A lot of material can be placed on loan files which children and teachers and schools could borrow on individual basis. These loan services could include: portfolios and albums, pictures, paintings, reproductions, sets of books on topics of curricular or extra-curricular interests, packaged lessons, material and supplies, rare and not easily available apparatus.

Especially for teachers, museums could publish monographs, undertake group study projects.

Some american museums have become so active that besides making their homes inviting to school public, and providing various extension and loan services to schools and other community groups they go travelling by water, air, land to far off communities that have no way of getting to the museums. A museum on wheels can become a very effective technique to reach Indian villages within fifty to 100 miles of a museum city.

So you see there is no limit to what can be done in and out of museums to serve children and education ; but all this depends on the quality and calibre of the staff that a museum has been able to get together.

Staff for a Children's Museum

This is an important problem needing top priority handling. The museum educator is quite a new professional in the field of museology. If children's museum

is essentially an educational agency it follows that the museum staff be first class educators.

National Children's Museum in Delhi is trying to evolve a training programme to prepare such personnel;—people who are museologists, *i.e.* trained technicians in the field who are also good teachers with a thorough understanding of child growth processes, and of the concept and the structure of education.

Even in larger museums it is rare to find a Curator who makes education of children his business.

A children's museum should strive to collect a staff that has administrators, exhibitors, and school-men, school liaison workers, child psychologists, journalists with a passion for children's literature and so on.

The UNESCO International Seminar, 1959 on, "The Role of Museums in Education," that met in Brooklyn, New York recommended that museums should have training programmes that would involve, understanding educational functions and problems of the museums, understanding of collection and of other museographic problems and have a thorough knowledge of the growth and development process of children.

On other questions such as building and furniture, there are no standard answers. It is really a secondary problem. A good museum does not depend on a good building for its success. Most of the good children's museums are converted houses. However, if one is fortunate enough to have a building designed for his museum, he must keep in mind the best that is available in

literature on museum building. Museum building has gone through a great change; from the earlier Victorian Mansions with massive foreboding Corinthian pillored facades and row upon row of cavernous galleries the size of football field, and a ceiling height of squash courts have been replaced by small pleasant modern buildings with an almost clinic like look, improved installations and ingenious exhibition techniques.

On this subject I need not go further than to state that besides administrative space, storage space, curatorial space, galleries, museum workshop a children's museum should also provide for studios, workshops, laboratories, clubrooms, as well as minor but important, other spaces for introductory demonstrations, lecture sessions, cloakrooms, washrooms and toilets, lunch-rooms, library, etc.

On furniture for children's museum galleries, workshops, studios, clubrooms I will stress the need for doing away with the traditional showcase (upright and horizontal) and approaching designs with a free hand. There is a wealth of material in the literature to look into.

What is important in the building as well as the furniture is the child's size, his physical capacities. This, of course, does not mean that you completely neglect the adults that are going to run or help run this museum.

I am sure I have not touched on all the relevant questions but I do hope I have given you enough to help you begin formulating, -conceiving your own Children's Museum.

Thank you.

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