

Social Unity/Harmony through Culture, Art and History: The Museum Challenges

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Introduction:

Nepal is a land locked country between two big countries in Asia: India and China. It is known throughout the world as the home to the world's highest peak, Mount Everest and as the birthplace of the light of the Asia Lord Buddha. The country is rectangular in shape and from North to south it descends gradually. Its total area is 147181 sqkm. It is five hundred miles from east to west and one hundred and forty miles wide in breath. Geographically it is divided into three parts including the Himalayan (High Mountain) region, mountain (hilly) region and plain (low land) region. With the diversity in the geographical structure it is also rich in ethno cultural diversity. Regarding act, culture and indigenous perspectives Nepal is termed as "a garden of various tribes". A recent survey carried out by the Government shows that Nepal has 125 ethnographic groups and 102 linguistic groups. Including the groups many are indigenous minority and extinction.

Historical evidence proves that from the very beginning of the history Nepal was a Hindu Monarch Kingdome.

The people's protest occurred in 2008 had brought a tremendous revolution in Nepal. Since the Monarchy System of 240 years was abolished by the enormous protest of people, Nepal was declared as country of Federal Democratic Republic with secularism. New constitution has been effected from 20th April 2015. The preamble of the constitution has ensured for protecting and promoting social and cultural solidarity, tolerance and harmony, and unity in diversity by recognizing the multiethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural and diverse regional characteristics, resolving to build an egalitarian society founded on the proportional inclusive and participatory principles in order to ensure economic equality, prosperity and social justice, by eliminating discrimination based on class, caste, region, language, religion and gender and all forms of caste-based untouchability.

Unity in diversity is the characteristic of Nepali society. Not only the human society but the unity and harmony of Natural phenomenon of Nepal are accumulating in this

'unity'. Almost all creatures, cow, ox, dog, crow, frog, snake and more are worshiped and venerated with deep reverence in different occasion. To respect the 'guest' as god is presently worldly known warm Nepali culture. The words from Hindu religious text "Atithi Devo Bhava" literally 'guest is god' has been exactly reflected in Nepali society.

Culture and society is generally affected by the scientific discovery, modern lifestyle, changing in thought and mentality brought by the time period. To identify the generation gap has been seen in the social tradition and culture; and a museum has the role and responsibility of preserving and promoting those all culture and cultural tradition in risk.

Museum itself is not a culture. Rather, protecting art, culture, tradition and history, museum plays vital role of accumulating past and present to construct prosperous future. Museum collaborates for an incredible role of flourishing knowledge and information on culture and civilization by the means of acquisition, conservation, preservation and exhibition of objects of tangible and intangible value reflecting the then society, economy, religion, culture, politics etc, created by our ancestors using their brilliance, contemplation, skill and technique. Hence, museum is known as a mirror of the society. A mirror neither exaggerates nor squishes. Manifesting the truth on the basis of proves through the authentic study and research is the purpose of museum.

Museum is a social school. A Guru disseminates knowledge through words in school, whereas the same knowledge is spread in museum through objects. Since museum welcomes not only educated and elite but also uneducated people of all classes and age groups. Visitors of all social class can have awareness, knowledge and understanding from the object exhibited in museum. For example, the museum exhibition of human evolution manifests that we all human being are similar; the diversity and dissimilarity is nothing but general result occurred by the natural environment, situation, livelihood etc. A museum gallery shedlight that the only different historical development, cultural diversity and circumstances has been created the diversity in class, occupation and livelihood of the people, thought all human being are from the same origin; and all human kind are in the present position and status experiencing the same historical moments (Aryal, 2010).

All human beings are the same as their anatomy is. Hence, the very information and understanding visitors get from the museum enhance the love and respect and reverence to the ancestor and the culture created and established by those forefathers. Where love and respect prevails the individual, family and community enjoy the existence of social harmony and unity. Social harmony and unity is such a pillar which brings peace in society and in entire nation. Peace paves the way towards the happiness and welfare of a nation.

Because of increasing scientific development, communality, ego and unhealthy political interference the social tolerance has been seen lost unexpectedly in some countries. Almost every day even new born child are affected by the war and their right to live has been seized. Many are deprived from food and shelter. In such harsh situation a museum plays vital role in spreading love, benevolence, compassion, empathy, sympathy, social unity through its various activities; or museum should play such role in the society, because museum is an institution which always has direct relation with society.

Museum in Nepal

In Nepali context, the history of museum is not very old since it has not crossed even a hundred years. The National Museum situated in Chhauni, Kathmandu is the first museum of Nepal. The National Museum of Nepal is multifunctional museum having the collection and exhibition of prehistoric to modern historical period. The National Museum has different gallery with different types of collections. The objects exhibited in Art Gallery, the Buddhist Gallery, Natural History Gallery are immensely taking part for social, cultural and religious relationship, closeness, familiarity and acquaintance.

Museum development in Nepal is in progressive phase. There are already established different types of art museum, regional museum, archaeological museum, natural history museum, community focused museum, commemorative museum etc. Development of museum through museum development committee and users committee are also already well introduced in Nepal. Because of innumerable scattered temples, palaces, stupas, viharas (monasteries), and many other art and architecture and various intangible culture represented by feast and festivals, Nepal country itself is well known as an open museum all over the world. Highly evaluating the outstanding universal Value of tangible and intangible aspect of

culture of Kathmandu and Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, both sites are enlisted as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Rato Machhendranath Jatra, Jatra of living Goddess Kumari, Bhairav Jatra, various feast and festival, culture, religion and historical dance and performances etc have been means of social harmony and unity. Such Jatra and festival are celebrated with the unity of the society; and the presence and company of the members of each and every family of that particular society is regarded compulsory in such cultural activities. A cultural moment of pulling the Chariot of Machhendranath one day by local women is memorable aspect in this context.

The role of the museum to keep on the social harmony and unity

In present 21st century the concept of a museum is not limited as a shelter for preservation and exhibition of art, culture and history but has gained broad sense of social inclusion and interdisciplinary aspect as well.

Museum is such an ideal place which neither have its caste nor religion, nor any class; the only characteristic of a museum is to spread message of unity, social inclusiveness, discipline and patriotic feeling.

An ideal museum should not make any kind of discrimination in acquisition, conservation and exhibition. It should give equal status to human being, any creature and nature. A museum should play the role for social cooperation eliminating all kind of discrimination and debate. Museum should be as cultural democracy.

Museum is like a garden of multihued flowers. People of different religion, language, culture, thought and feeling from educated or non educated background can be the visitor of a same museum. On the other way, an ideal museum can exhibits all kind of objects created by human being or nature, no matter to which religion, society, community, country the object is associated, according to the theme of that particular museum.

As thousands stars blinking on the open sky, every day we can see the known and known hundred faces in museum premises. A museum is the only place where the social harmony is prevailed not only by the exhibited objects but also by the free and liberal gathering, friendship, conversation of the people from different societies.

The slogan of the ICOM for this year 2019 is "Museum as a cultural hubs the future of tradition".

An educated people could have understanding through study and dialogue and discussion; but for the uneducated people museum is the only open book from where he can broaden his knowledge and acquaintance about the culture and civilization which helps them on keeping social harmony. Therefore, a museum should encourage the visitor for social harmony and unity not only through the traditional types of exhibition but also introducing various kind of modern scientific technology. For example: a museum can develop an education garden to serve to the society, it can organize educational and awareness programs for visitors and community as well, and occasionally it can conduct training program on socio-culture-biodiversity and some program of unity for youth. Also by conducting seminar, training, interaction workshop in different topic a museum can broad its field of activities. In the same way, museum can organize training program for school and college teachers on capacity building to contribute to sustainable quality education. Museum should conduct various socio cultural activities related and addressed with different community like traditional cultural dances, museum expo, food festival, documentary of living legendry personalities etc.

Some of above mentioned programs are initiated by Nepali museum also. Such program helps in increasing respect and acceptance to different community culture. Thus, museum should always be as open door and open mind to keep on social harmony and unity.

Public Private Partnership

A museum should development partnership with various organization, schools, college, university, cultural clubs etc. to carry out the social acquaintance, cooperation and message of unity to each society and community.

In the context of Nepal, many villages have been playing important role in developing internal and external tourism through running several home stay in their village. A museum also should extend its area of activities towards capacity building program targeting to those home stay planner, organizer and managers about Nepalese tradition and culture on welcoming guest in their home stay, way of talking and dealing with guest etc. A home stay not only support on uplifting economy of the

people but also it helps in understanding intercultural phenomenon and respect each other's culture and tradition.

Replacement of conservative and superstitious traditional with positive new thoughts and faith

It is natural to be changed the lifestyle and thought along with the demand of time and technical development. A culture without changes as per the demand of time would be nothing more than a pond without outlet.

To understand the youth sentiment is necessary to empower the social harmony and unity. Instead of old conservative tradition and culture which may distress even to the human right, different contemporary idea should take place for social improvement. Still a very conservative practice of sending a girl or woman out from the home to stay in dirty hut built outside the village for 4 days in their monthly cycle is prevailing in some remote region of Nepal. Such insecurity has taken even the life of numbers of women. A museum should reach to the grass level of each and every society and community with its awareness program aiming to aware against different superstition and conservative practice. It cannot be presumed social unity and cooperation prevail in a nation until and unless each and every society does not enjoy the social justice and human right.

Social Networking

It is felt almost necessary to develop a kind of museum media. Because of the scientific development, the entire world has become global village under an umbrella. In this sense, museum can have responsibility to work for social coordination and unity through electronic appliance, news paper, books and other publication.

Challenges of the Social harmony\unity for Museum

Following are the challenges of a museum for social harmony and unity:

Lack of policy and law for museum:

Nepal doesn't have any specific Act or law and policy for museum yet. In lacking of specific law and policy organized and sustainable development and expansion of museum is being very difficult. Hence it is felt necessary to mention clearly in the policy even about carrying social and museum phenomenon together. Actually, in

lacking of knowledge in policy maker on museum and museology, museum matter has been deemed in priority. In present context museums both in central and province level should take strong initiation on building act and policy based on *Federal System*.

It has not been long the country enjoying Federal System; and it is first experience for Nepal as well. Presently Nepal has 7 provinces. There are many prioritized sectors for each province on preservation and flourishing of culture. All the regional museums are converted into provincial museum now.

Lack of resources and trained skilled manpower.

It is necessary a museum to reach to each society and community for spreading sensitivity of social harmony, tolerance and unity. Since nation has given less priority to museum and has taken as an unproductive sector, there is always lack of sufficient budget and manpower. Museology is completely a technical field and it requires a trained and skilled manpower on various disciplines within a museum. It is already very urgent to recruit sufficient manpower empowered with technical knowledge for province museum and newly establishing community museum.

Competition on museum establishment

After the great peoples' protest of 2063 all the indigenous communities has been much aware about preserving and promoting their culture and identity; and they have understood even the importance of museum in cultural promotion. Peoples form individual societies are actively following and insisting government, their political parties or leaders to influence for their community museum. But a big deficiency is museums are being established without any proper plan, DPR(Department(al) Performance Report), and study about the nature of museum they want to establish. It definitely affects on the quality of museum. Therefore, competition should not be in establishing new museum but for quality and result oriented museum.

Lack of transferring skill and technique to next generation:

The art objects exhibited in museum are master creation and collection; and they are the outcome of skill, dexterity, expertise and long experience which cannot be produced by unskilled general one. The respect we pay for a particular artist of master piece is also the admiration to his entire community. If a traditional skill and technology is lost once, it is lost forever. There was tradition of handing over such

practice to next generation. In present context, because of globalization, urbanization and acculturation, own traditional folk skills has been forgotten. It seems that somehow museum is absent in covering all the socio-culture aspects of community.

Social network and partnership

In Nepalese context of museum, less priority is given for social network and partnership. Museum is a strong means for the cultural preservation and promotion and universal brotherhood not only nationally but internationally as well. However, still it is felt lacking in developing networking and partnership effectively.

Conclusion

Museum is the primary destination for studying, researching and understanding the culture and civilization of any country formally. Museum is a place which can provide diverse knowledge on history, culture, civilization, religion, art, architecture, scarce objects of historical value. It prompts people for social justice, social inclusiveness, social acquaintance and unity. The recent saying of Hon. President of China "Contact and relationship keeps civilization alive" is very much relevant in this context. To keep culture and civilization alive forever each others' culture and tradition should be equally respected with positive and encouraging attitude. It is possible only by the cooperation and partnership the social harmony, unity and brotherhood is possible; and bringing all the museum of the world under a single global umbrella would be best approach of that universal brotherhood.



Stone tools of Stone age



Rituals utensils of Northern Himalayan region



Umamaheswora



Ardhanariswora(synthesis of masculine and feminine energies of the universe)



Rituals utensils of Northern Himalayan region



Rituals utensils of Hindu and Buddhist Newar community



God of Jain religion



Dolls representing of Different ethnic groups of Nepal



Muslim religious script "Sahanama" 16th century



Hari Hari Bahana Lokeshwora(Buddhist and Hindu god)



Thanka painting



Different utensils found from Northern Himalayan Mustang cave