



Heritage matters

ICOM INTERCOM meets for the first time in South Asia in Kolkata from 22 to 25th February 2018. Delegates and directors from 26 countries from across the world came together and after deliberations concurred that putting People in Public Private Partnerships (PPP) humanises economic rationalism and that museums and heritage conservation agencies must respond and adapt to changing times and economic imperatives

The International Committee on Management (INTERCOM) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), Paris, met last week in Kolkata to deliberate on the kind of paradigm shift needed for museums and heritage agencies if they are to progress through entrepreneurial engagement. It is apt that Emami Art, a philanthropic body, sponsored the meeting. Emami has just opened one of the largest Not for Profit spaces called the Kolkata Centre for Creativity. In the words of its President Ms. Richa Agarwal, the centre will embrace the full ambit of creativity from visual and performing arts to digital and arts education. It will also draw on the permanent collections of museums to create installations. She said that it will be at once a museum, a cultural hub and a fountain of creativity.

The President of ICOM INTERCOM, Mr. Ole Winter from Denmark and Ms. Reena Dewan, President of ICOM India and Vice President of Emami Art asked what is entrepreneurial engagement? The adjective entrepreneurial is used in a host of different contexts. It embodies a range of meanings. There is a multiplicity of implications. The meeting of the peak professional body for museums in the world addressed entrepreneurial engagement within culture, tourism, museum and heritage sectors underlining the concepts, skills and paradigms associated with managing larger and smaller institutions with flexibility, innovation, responsiveness and competitive advantage.

Why entrepreneurial engagement? Museums, heritage and tourism bodies in many parts of India, Asia and the rest of the world have for too long been run on a deficit model depending on government support and status quo. It is true that heritage collections and sites are a permanent liability for the state which is the custodian of people's heritage. However, current economic times demand that these agencies are responsive and relevant to their stakeholder groups and engage in ethically grounded practice and development. Moreover, the rapid growth of tourism requires responsible and sustainable use of non-renewable heritage resources. These imperatives require entrepreneurial management paradigms for productive cultural development.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ENGAGEMENT AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Entrepreneurial engagement has been an integral part of corporate management of heritage conservation agencies for some time in India. The Archaeological Survey of India administers 'Adopt a Monument' scheme for maintenance of several heritage sites. The peak Indian conservation body has one of the most rigorous set of processes and compliance mechanisms to make sure that its heritage assets are properly protected and that any commodification does not diminish the heritage values.

PPP has become popular ever since the Government of India started liberalising the economy and introduced the most ambitious Corporate Social Responsibility provision at 2%, the highest in the world. There are several major companies in India that are investing significant sums in heritage conservation and cultural development. While this is a promising and much needed trend, we must be cautious and adhere to the Codes of Ethics of Professional bodies such the International Council of Museums and International Council for Monuments and Sites. UNESCO suite of six cultural conventions dealing with different aspects of heritage conservation are also impor-



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tant compliance mechanisms. India is a State Party with legal obligations to these international treaties.

The crunch question is whether the agencies managing museums, archaeological sites and heritage conservation have the capacity to take advantage of the CSR windows of opportunity in Andhra Pradesh. How can they diversify their resource base without total reliance on the government subsidies? There is a tendency for private institutions to represent and wanting to overtake the responsibilities of museum collections and protected heritage sites. This could be irresponsible and highly unethical. Governments are indeed the legal authorities and accountable before the courts as per the respective legislative mandates. Nevertheless, increasingly heritage agencies are being asked to be innovative in sourcing funds not only for conservation but most importantly public programming through interpretive exhibits, education programs and events. Addressing the INTERCOM meeting Professor Vinay Srivastava, Director General of Anthropological Survey of India said that deep research is critical in understanding collections conserva-

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—Charles Darwin

tion and that universities are failing to support museums and archaeological conservation. Professor Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri, Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manava Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, called for applied heritage studies to be fostered for supporting museums and heritage conservation.

Mr. Rajesh Purohit, the newly appointed Director of the Indian Museum, Kolkata, opened his galleries and collections for debate and discussion. It is the oldest and largest museum in the Sub Continent. It is ready to shed its cocoon of a curiosity cabinet. In dusting off things, he needs to engage with the corporate sector and a diversity of partners to secure the necessary resources. ICOM is running a series of round-tables across the world to explore the future of museums and the shared, but also the profoundly dissimilar conditions, values and practices of museums in diverse and rapidly changing societies. Taking advantage of this global process he facilitated a roundtable of questions during the INTERCOM meeting.

What do you think are the most relevant and important contributions which museums can make to society in the coming decade? What do you think are the strongest trends and the most serious challenges faced by your country in the coming decade? What do you think are the strongest trends and the most serious challenges faced by museums in your country in the coming decade? How do you think museums need to change and adapt their principles, values and working methods over the next decade to meet these challenges and enrich their contributions? The background to the Indian Museum Roundtable was the INTERCOM meeting and the emphasis on the significance of entrepreneurial engagement for museums in the coming decade.

One of the telling signs of the times is resoundingly articulated in the quotation of Charles Darwin in the Evolution Gallery of the Indian Museum, "It's not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change". How well people and cultural institutions adapt in Andhra Pradesh will determine their success in forging ahead. Anything less, at peril is the history and heritage of Telugu people.



Partnerships with reputed commercial outlets add to the coffers of the museum budgets. They become civic spaces for more than consumption. Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark merchandises through its shop, an extension of interpretation of its collections and exhibitions, quality assured and bought as a memory keepers and souvenirs. National Gallery of Art, Denmark, has one of the best cafes/restaurants that offer heritage cuisine



In dusting off old galleries in its 200+ history, the Indian Museum hopes to bring to fullness and life the famous Buddhist architectural remains from Bharhut Stupa belonging to Sunga period along with similar fragments from Bodhgaya. Contextual enhancement will be realised through augmented reality and in presenting the collections through in-depth interpretation

Next week: Heritage Matters will look at the highly endangered heritage of Bhattiprolu and its primacy of place in the history of Andhra Pradesh