

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Ethnographic Museums in Arunachal Pradesh: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the easternmost part of India, and its rich cultural heritage is preserved, showcased and propagated through its museums, especially district ethnographic museums representing different tribes. This research paper attempts to highlight the challenges and prospects of ethnographic museums under the Museum Section of the Directorate of Research, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. A qualitative approach was used to write this research paper based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data includes personal observations, interviews, and secondary materials, including articles, govt. reports, museum annual reports, and newspaper reports. This study reveals that, despite the challenges museums face, there are numerous opportunities for the museum to enhance and preserve Arunachal Pradesh's cultural heritage. The study also shows that the state has great potential to develop community-based museums as per the standards of the new museological perspective that benefits the people and the state.

KEYWORDS

• Ethnographic Museums • Challenges • Prospects • Cultural Heritage, Arunachal Pradesh

INTRODUCTION

To continue growing as an institution or any organisation, especially in today's fast-changing world. It is necessary to examine and review work approaches regularly. To be more effective, we must first identify the problem

areas and their prospects by developing a strategy to manage these challenges effectively through proper research. Similarly, a museum is an institution that must continually update its approaches to meet society's needs. For instance, since the foundation of the

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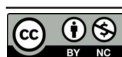
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International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1946, the definition of the museum has been changed several times. Recently, on August 24, 2022, in Prague, ICOM adopted a new definition of a museum in response to changing demands in the museum profession.

"A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage." Open to the public, accessible, and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally, and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing." (ICOM, 2022).

Thus, museums must keep up with the times to meet the needs of the museum and visitors and ensure their long-term existence and sustainability. As a result, this study topic was selected to examine the current state of ethnographic museums in Arunachal Pradesh, their challenges, and prospects for enhancing museum development.

Brief Introduction of Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the easternmost part of India and shares three international borders with China, Bhutan, and Myanmar, and two states borders with Assam and Nagaland. The influence of all these can be seen in the cultural diversity of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Presently, in Arunachal, there are around 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes with different ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own different culture. Altogether, the state is predominantly inhabited by the tribal people. According to the India State Forest Report (ISFR) (Press Information Bureau, 2022). Arunachal Pradesh has a forest cover of 79.33% of its total area. Like other tribes across the world, the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh also rely on natural resources for their daily needs and all their culture and beliefs are deeply embedded in nature. However, unlike in the old days, the use of these natural resources to meet daily needs is gradually declining because of globalisation. Therefore, before it vanishes, it is necessary to preserve this rich cultural heritage. Here, ethnographic museums play a crucial role in preserving their rich cultural heritage.

Brief History of Museums in Arunachal Pradesh

The history of development of the museums in Arunachal Pradesh started in the year 1956 with the establishment of the Central Museum in Shillong, Meghalaya, to the Directorate Headquarter at Shillong (Ghosh, Dey, & Ray, Museums of Arunachal Pradesh, 2023). Then, Shillong was the headquarters of the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Arunachal Pradesh was formerly known as NEFA.

Furthermore, from 1960 onwards, six museums were established at the District Headquarters, namely Khonsa, Tezu, Along, Pasighat, Ziro, and Bomdila; afterwards, four more museums at District Headquarters were established, namely Changlang, Daporijo, Seppa and Tawan. All these are Ethnographic museums. (Ghosh, Museum Movement in Arunachal Pradesh, 2005) (Ghosh, Dey, & Ray, Museums of Arunachal Pradesh, 2023)

The period between 1988 to 1990 is a significant period in the history of museum development in Arunachal Pradesh. In 1987, after gaining statehood, the administrative headquarters shifted from Shillong to Itanagar, the new capital. Likewise, the entire collection of the Central Museum in Shillong was also shifted to Itanagar, and the Central Museum was renamed the Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum to commemorate the birth centenary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1989), the first Prime Minister of India. On 3rd February 1988, the foundation stone of the new building was laid by the then President of India, Shri R. Venkataraman. On 1st January 1990, the museum at Itanagar was inaugurated by Shri R.D. Pradhan, the then Governor of Arunachal Pradesh. (Ghosh, Dey, & Ray, Museums of Arunachal Pradesh, 2023). (Ghosh, Museum Movement in Arunachal Pradesh, 2005).

Presently, all the museums mentioned above fall under the Museum Section of the Directorate of Research, Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. There are five sections in the Directorate of Research: Archaeology, Culture, History, Philology, Museum & Archive, and, apart from these five sections, two associated sections: Reference Library and Publication. (Directorate of Research, n.d.)

Number and Types of Museums in Arunachal Pradesh

According to the earlier published "Directory of Museums in India" by Usha Agarwal (Agarwal, 2009) and the "Directory of Museums in India, Ministry of Culture, Government of India (Seth & Sadiya, 2023). Both recorded 13 museums in Arunachal Pradesh. However, over time, several museums of various types were established in Arunachal Pradesh. During data collection for the research, more than 30 museums were identified, including government, NGO, community, and private types. The actual number may be higher as new museums continue to emerge, particularly small or local museums that may go unnoticed or undocumented. Based on the nature of the collection, the museums of Arunachal Pradesh can be categorised into ethnographic museums, archaeological museums, religious museums, personalia museums, science museums, natural history museums (NHM), war memorial museums and living museums. Among these museum categories, the ethnographic museum is the most numerous. As mentioned earlier, the reason could be that tribal people predominantly inhabit the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Among all the museums, the oldest museum in Arunachal is under the Directorate of Research. Therefore, the present study focuses on the museums under the Museum Section of the Directorate of Research, Itanagar, and presently, there are 12 museums in Arunachal Pradesh under the Museum Section of the Directorate of Research, of which 11 are located in the district headquarters, and 1 is located in the state capital as the State Museum. 12 museums are 1. Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum at Itanagar, 2. District Museum, Aalo 3. District Museum Bomdila, 4. District Museum, Changlang, 5. District Museum, Daporijo, 6. District Museum, Khonsa, 7. District Museum, Pasighat, 8. District Museum, Roing, 9. District Museum, Seppa, 10. District Museum, Tawang 11. District Museum, Tezu. 12. District Museum, Ziro.

It is observed that despite the state of rich cultural heritage and the presence of several ethnographic museums under the Directorate of Research over time, several problems and challenges persist, hindering the growth and development of these museums. Therefore, the present research aims to examine the problems and explore and discuss the prospects for museums' development and growth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is the outcome of exploratory research work. Qualitative data was collected from various museums of Arunachal Pradesh to explore and understand their problems and prospects. The primary data was gathered through interviews with museum staff and the researcher's observations while on a dedicated visit to museums in Arunachal Pradesh, including Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum, Itanagar, during the internship. Recently, for the doctoral research work, the first author again visited several museums in Arunachal Pradesh. The secondary data were gathered from journal articles, books, brochures, newspapers, the Museum Bulletin of Arunachal Pradesh, official government websites, and monthly reports of the Directorate of Research Museum section, Itanagar, and so forth. Furthermore, all collected data were examined and analysed for a better understanding of the situation and future possibilities.

The Problems and Prospects of Museums in Arunachal Pradesh

Highlighted below are some of the most significant problems, challenges, and prospects of museums in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly through examples from museums under the Directorate of Research, Itanagar. The problems and Challenges section includes financial constraints, a lack of skilled human resources and training, challenges in documenting museum collections, challenges in representing cultural heritage, challenges in display techniques and exhibits, and challenges in museum accessibility. Moreover, the prospects section includes collaboration with organisations and Institutions, community participation, museum marketing, public relations, and digitalisation.

Problems and Challenges

1. Financial Constraints

Adequate funding plays a crucial role in a museum's growth, whether it is a private or a government museum. Running a museum requires significant funding. Lack of adequate funding is a severe problem that hampers the maintenance of collections, conservation, preventive conservation measures, lab equipment, exhibition development, digital technology, museum accessibility, infrastructure, and the conduct of educational

activities or programs, among other museum-related work. Overall, it hinders a museum's growth. Similarly, this problem of financial constraints is also observed in the museums of Arunachal Pradesh, for instance, the government museums under the Museum section of the Directorate of Research, Itanagar, are also facing financial limitations.

An analysis of the monthly reports of museum sections under the Directorate of Research reveals that, as the state government administered museums, these museums depend primarily on government funding, which is used for the construction of museums and for running them, including daily activities. For instance, in the 2022-2023 annual budget, the government has allotted approximately Rs. 16,800,000 (one crore and sixty-eight lakhs) to the Museum Section, Directorate of Research, for organising workshops, procurement and refilling of diesel for the generator, fire extinguishers, fire alarm, maintenance of electronic gadgets, digital museum at Itanagar etc. (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2022). Further, adding to financial insufficiency in a newspaper interview of K.Tayeng, the then Director in Charge of the Directorate of Research, Itanagar, also said that *"in the financial year 2021-22, the state government had granted Rs. 13,69,64,000 and Rs. 8,21,22,000 under the non-plan and plan, which were insufficient."* (Arunachal Observer, 2022) This shows that, despite regular budgetary allocations, the museums are facing financial insufficiency that directly impacts museum growth.

2. Lack of Skilled Human Resources and Training

One of the main challenges in the functioning of the ethnographic museums under the Directorate of Research, Itanagar, is the shortage of human resources and the limited availability of trained museum personnel. Human resources are essential, especially in organisations such as museums, where skilled personnel are required to handle a range of museum work, including collection, documentation, conservation, exhibitions, and education.

The issue of a lack of human resources was strongly found in both the primary and secondary data. From the interview with current and former museum staff and the

researcher's observation during visits to the museums, it is found that there is a crucial and urgent need for human resources in the museums. In an interview with the current and former museum staff, such as the museum Keeper and Deputy Director, all express the same lack of manpower in the museum and also mentioned that due to a lack of staff, they are required to undertake multitasking work burden. In the interview, the then Deputy Director also added that they are now working on updating the old Recruitment Rule (RR) into the new RR. The new RR will include museology subjects or degree holders in the qualifications for museum posts, as in the old RR, where they were absent.

These findings are further substantiated or reinforced by a state newspaper report. Regarding the lack of human resources in the museums of Arunachal Pradesh, the Arunachal Observer Newspaper published the same on 13 April 2022. This report provides valuable insight into the shortage of human resources in museums in Arunachal Pradesh (Arunachal Observer, 2022). According to the newspaper report, various posts are vacant, like district research officer (DRO), assistant research officer (ARO), Curator, Guide lecturer, etc. It impacts the museum's smooth functioning, said K. Tayeng (Arunachal Observer, 2022). R.N. Kolley (Officer on Special Duty) said the Assam State Museum has 62 employees, compared to only 10 at the state museum in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh (Arunachal Observer, 2022).

S.K. Ghose, former Deputy Director of Museums and Archives, Directorate of Research, Itanagar, said that one assistant curator had been given charge of museums in various districts in the absence of required staff (Arunachal Observer, 2022). This lack of human resources is also affecting the documentation of museum collections.

3. Challenges in Documentation of Museum Collections

Documentation of collections is a fundamental function of any museum, and all museums under the Directorate of Research also maintain a Manual Accession Register for their collections. However, while examining the museums documentation Manual Register, it is observed that the museums have maintain all the basics accession register which includes

details such as Serial no., Accession no., Name (Local/ English Equivalent), Total no, Brief Description, Model or Actual, Tribe Community, Sources of acquisition, Place of acquisition, Date of acquisition, Mode of acquisition, Price and Remarks. However, there are very limited details mentioned in most of the Brief Description section, such as limited contextual details mentioned on the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) associated with the objects, such as ritual significance, oral tradition, indigenous knowledge, etc. A documentation gap, with limited details on Indigenous knowledge or ICH associated with the object, may lead to the loss of significant knowledge or information related to the object. The limited digitalised documentation further adds to this challenge.

Another significant challenge observed in the documentation practices is the lack of a digitalised database/ Collection management database. Most museums still mainly rely on maintaining the collection records in the hardbound Manual Register, such as the District Museum Aalo, District Museum Ziro, etc., while knowing the risk of only relying on manual registration, some museum personnel also undertake efforts to digitise records using basic tools such as Microsoft Office, Word, and Excel to document the object records. However, without a structured, digitalised database, it is difficult to manage the vast collection; its accessibility, tracking, and retrieval also affect the documentation of intangible Cultural Heritage or knowledge associated with the objects. Likewise, the limits of contextual details and the digitalised database also further affect the research potential; for instance, to conduct an exhibition, we need all contextual background of the objects to create stories, narratives, cultural interpretations, and preservation of the objects, etc. Further interview with the (former Deputy Director of Museum) also emphasised the same: the first and foremost need is to digitalise the collection, which is essential for any museum activities, such as educational and exhibition activities, and he also highlighted that for such digitalisation, adequate human resources with the required skills are required.

4. Representation of Cultural Heritage

The way objects are represented is very significant, especially in ethnographic museums, because visitors perceive how they

are represented. It is observed that in most ethnographic museums of Arunachal Pradesh. It is represented as object-centred and very limited in its cultural context; for example, an object is displayed in the J.N. State Museum, object name "*EMUL MULKU*", and the object label includes its Accession number, Local name-*Emul Mulku*, English-Amulet, Tribe-Adi, Locality-East Siang and Utility-used as a sacred item, and a very limited description of the object can be observed here. A similar condition of object label descriptions can also be observed in other ethnographic museums of Arunachal Pradesh.

5. Display Techniques and Exhibits

Display techniques and exhibits in museums play a significant role in effective communication, engaging visitors, and making museum visits more interesting. However, it is observed that very few interpretive tools are used in museums, aside from audiovisual recordings on the TV screen, maps, and diagrams. Some of these interpretive tools are noticed at the J.N. State Museum, and a few at the district museum; in other museums, there is very little use of interpretive tools alongside their exhibits. For instance, at the District Museum Aalo, objects related to the Mopin festival of the Galo tribe are displayed. However, this display could be engaging and entertaining with a short video of the festival that demonstrates the use and significance of the objects. Likewise, the use of multimedia, such as Virtual and Augmented Reality, can make the experience more immersive and interactive for visitors.

Another problem noticed is that some museums have renovated their buildings and display techniques, such as the District Museum at Pasighat, the District Museum at Roing, etc. However, there are still a few museums left that need immediate care; for instance, the Ziro District Museum and, mainly, the District Museum Aalo. The condition of display techniques, such as showcases, lighting, object labels, etc., is appalling. (Figure 1). In these displays, one can observe the deterioration of the objects, object label and the direct exposure of the tube and bulb light to the object, etc., which is very harmful for the objects. This museum needs urgent assistance. Similarly, the other museum's condition, like that of the District Museum Ziro, is almost identical. Thus, museums need to improve or upgrade

modern display techniques such as proper lighting systems, showcase types according to the type of exhibits, use standard object labels, etc



Figure 1: Objects displayed at District Museum Aalo, West Siang, Arunachal Pradesh

6. Museum Amenities and Accessibility

The purpose of a museum is not only to display and preserve cultural heritage, but also to ensure accessibility and inclusivity by providing high-quality museum services to people from all walks of life. So, with the positive experience shared in the museum, the visitor desires to revisit the museum again. Therefore, museum amenities and accessibility are significant factors in attracting visitors.

Amenities at the museum include a cafeteria, clean drinking water, a cloakroom, souvenir shops, a restroom, baby feeding rooms, and amenities for differently-abled people, such as wheelchairs, ramps, escalators, braille, tactile exhibits, videos, and audio equipment. However, in the context of museums accessibilities, very few museums offers these facilities, to certain extent the J.N. Museum made efforts to integrate museum accessibility for their visitors by providing amenities, such as Braille label besides the dioramas for the visual impaired, toilets, an elevator in the Northeast Gallery, AC, CCTV cameras, a small counter which works as a reception, ticket counter, cloakroom, and sells published books by the Directorate of Research, Itanagar. Accessibility in J.N. Museum can be further improved by adding or developing a few more facilities, such as souvenir shops, a cafeteria, a cloakroom, seats in a gallery for resting, a baby feeding room, ramps, visual and audio guides, etc.

Several museums in India provide good facilities for visitors. The museums in Arunachal Pradesh can take examples from them. For instance, **a)** Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) in Bhopal provides a separate room labelled "Mother's Corner" for feeding, changing diapers with the facilities of a bed, chairs, fan, baby cradles, baby strollers and prams, etc., **b)** The National Museum, New Delhi has created a tactile gallery called Anubhav Gallery, especially for differently-abled people, **c)** Museums like the Salarjung Museum in Hyderabad, the National Museum in New Delhi, etc., provide audio-guided tours for visitors. Along with an audio guide, they provide a brochure/leaflet highlighting the museum's masterpieces. Likewise, the museum of Arunachal Pradesh can improve accessibility by providing a mother's corner, a tactile gallery for differently abled visitors, souvenir shops, and other amenities.

Prospects and Opportunities

1. Collaboration with Organisations and Institutions

Collaboration with various research, cultural, tourism and heritage organizations and institutions can play a significant role in the development and growing prospects of museums in Arunachal Pradesh.

1.1. Collaboration with the Tourism Industry

One of the most significant sectors to collaborate with and enhance the museum's prospects in Arunachal is the tourism sector. Both the museum and tourism industries are closely related, as museums are among the most popular tourist attractions, whether for domestic or international tourists, as they enable tourists to explore, experience, enjoy, and learn about the region's cultural heritage in a short span of time. In museum, tourism increase visitor numbers, enabling museums to connect with more visitors. For instance, in the United States, 78% of all leisure travellers engage in brief heritage activities, such as visiting museums (British Council, 2016).

As per an interview with the keeper of the J.N. State museum in 2023, the annual footfall in 2022 was around 24,000. To further increase visitor footfall, the museum can actively collaborate with the state government tourism department, local private tourism agencies, tour and travel operators, hotels, homestays, etc., by distributing museum brochures or pamphlets to them.

After exploring and analysing the official website of the state tourism department, it is found that, presently, in their E-guide book section online (related to tour itinerary). In these e-guide books/brochures, several significant museums are briefly mentioned, such as Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum, Tawang Monastery Museum, Tai-Khampti Singpho Museum, and District Museums (Arunachal Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, n.d.).

Moreover, on their website in the itinerary section, they listed out 11 tourist circuits with itineraries where they have mentioned a few museums in their itinerary, such (Itanagar-Ziro-Daporijo- Aalo- Pasighat) provided Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum, and in (Tezpur-Bhalukpong-Bomdila- Tawang) mentioned the Forest museum & ethnographic museum (Arunachal Tourism, Governemnt of Arunachal Pradesh, n.d.). Thus, museums can actively engage with the tourism department to include more museums in their tour package itineraries, brochures, and websites, thereby reaching more tourists. Moreover, in Arunachal Pradesh, there are several museums, especially in almost every old district headquarters, where the government has established district museums that represent the district's socio-

cultural heritage.

Thus, collaboration with the tourism industry can play a major role in raising awareness, attracting more visitors, and enhancing the museum's growth prospects in the state. Moreover, the recent growing interest of the State Government of Arunachal Pradesh and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in the cultural tourism of Arunachal Pradesh shows several indirect opportunities for the museum as well. For instance, in the annual budget estimates for 2022-23 and 2023-24, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh allotted crores to boost tourism in the state (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2022).

1.2. Collaboration with International, National, State, and District Museums

Another most significant sector is the museum sector itself such as a museum's collaboration with other international, national, state, district museums, and village museums could be very beneficial for the prospects of the museum, as these types of collaboration can add and share knowledge for the visitor and as well for the museum. Local museums can learn many things from other museums, such as expertise, and new skills for documentation, exhibition, preservation, conservation, management techniques, ideas for safeguarding and promoting the cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh.

During the research, interaction with local visitors at the J.N. State Museum, Itanagar, and other museums regarding the museum experience. The visitor responded that they had already seen these same collections. They wanted to see, explore and experience some new things in museums. Here, the museums can collaborate with other villages, districts, national and international museums. Conducting a temporary exhibition, inviting a travelling exhibition, and exchanging temporary exhibitions. For instance, the National Museum, New Delhi, also frequently conducts temporary exhibitions from the museum collection, the reserve collection, or in collaboration with national and international museums. For instance, in 2020, a travelling exhibition, "**Golden Men**" from Kazakhstan, was exhibited at the National Museum, New Delhi. Likewise, the Museums of Arunachal Pradesh can also conduct international, national, interstate and interdistrict exhibitions in collaboration with other museums

by exchanging exhibitions or travelling exhibitions. So that other museums at the national and international levels will learn about the rich culture of Arunachal Pradesh, which could also help reach new audiences and visitors to Arunachal, and help them learn about other cultures.

The travelling exhibition or exchange of temporary exhibitions is always successful in attracting museum visitors because people are also curious about other cultures. Moreover, the travelling exhibition has always been successful. According to the interview with S.K. Ghosh, the then Deputy Director of the Museum section, Directorate of Research, Itanagar, found that the J.N. State Museum had also previously collaborated with international museums.

Apart from collaborating with other museums and organising temporary exhibitions in them. The mobile exhibition can be an excellent way to reach remote areas. It could cater to people who cannot visit museums due to a lack of transportation or other reasons, particularly children and older people who cannot travel to towns and cities to visit museums. For instance, the museum can also organise a mobile exhibition such as **"Know Your Own Rich Cultural Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh,"** as Arunachal Pradesh has diverse ethnic groups, allowing people to learn about other tribes' cultures and heritage. In this way, the museum can raise public awareness of the preservation of its cultural heritage and the role of museums. This collaboration could also help the museum acquire donations of artefacts and funding.

1.3. Collaboration with Educational Institutions

To attract students and youth, collaboration with educational institutions is a key sector. Museums are often viewed as repositories of knowledge, and one of their primary purposes is to disseminate it. By collaborating with educational institutions, such as schools, colleges, universities, and competitive exam coaching centres, the museum can provide hands-on teaching and learning experiences to make teaching and learning more effective in enhancing students' knowledge. The museum needs to closely examine the curriculum and syllabus, and discuss with teachers how the museum could help their students in their studies, and accordingly plan workshops and activities for educational institutes, such

as museum tours, hands-on experiences engaging in creative learning, and fun learning activities. For instance, the Arunachal Pradesh Science Centre Museum in Itanagar offers educational tours, robotic competitions, and innovation festivals. Likewise, the ethnographic museums of Arunachal Pradesh can offer guided tours, lectures, talks, exhibitions, and workshops on the traditional knowledge of the Arunachal tribes, including handicrafts, weaving, bamboo craft, wooden craft, pottery, painting, storytelling sessions, and cultural performances. Furthermore, the museum can also create and offer lectures, guided tour packages, and short-term courses on art and culture to help aspirants prepare for competitive exams in Arunachal Pradesh. These will also raise awareness of the importance of preserving their cultural heritage, increase the significance of museums among the youth, and foster a desire to visit museums.

2. Community Participation

Community participation could be one of the museum's most promising prospects in Arunachal. ICOM's new definition of the museum also includes community participation, as Arunachal Pradesh is home to many tribes. As a result, most of the museums here are also an ethnographic museum. The Museum of Arunachal Pradesh can carry out various activities in this regard. The following are some examples from other museums from which the Arunachal Museums may draw inspiration:

2.1. Outreach programs

On 21 March 2018, the National Museum Institute, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, organised a one-day workshop on the intangible cultural aspects of nomadic tent-making for school students from Kargyam Sattoo village, Ladakh (National Museum Institute, n.d.). Similarly, the museums of Arunachal Pradesh can also conduct workshops in remote areas or villages of the state.

2.2. Volunteer Programs

The museums of Arunachal Pradesh can also organise volunteer programs, such as those at the National Museum, New Delhi, such as *Path Pradarshak* and *Yuva Saathi*. *Path Pradarshak* is a Volunteer Guide Programme (VGP) in which the guide helps the visitor tour the museum in

90 minutes by highlighting masterpieces and stimulating visitors' interest (Press Information Bureau, 2013). *Yuva Saathi* is the Young Visitor Program, where volunteers are drawn from colleges in Delhi and trained for three months specifically to guide schoolchildren's groups and engage them in learning, understanding, and enjoying their visit to the National Museum. (National Museum Institute, 2023). Likewise, to engage the community of Arunachal Pradesh. These kinds of volunteer programs will be very beneficial, especially for the youth of Arunachal, as many unemployed graduate students living in the capital city are searching for jobs and preparing for competitive exams. So, youth can take up these volunteer programs as their part-time job. Moreover, it can also generate employment and raise awareness about museums and the preservation of cultural heritage among the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

2.3 Collaboration with local artists and artisans

Collaboration with local artists and artisans, and involving them in museum activities, is very significant for a museum. Its importance is evident in museums in India and abroad, where they often collaborate with artists and artisans. Some of the worth-mentioning museums are the National Craft Museum in New Delhi, where, on the museum premises, artists and artisans open their stalls and sell their artworks, which they also demonstrate. Similarly, the Tribal Museum in Bhopal (M.P.) also invites artists to conduct workshops, demonstrate their art, and sell their artworks. Similarly, docents showcase their live art and sell their artworks to visitors at Dakshin Chitra Museum (near Chennai). Likewise, the ethnographic museum of Arunachal Pradesh has great potential, as the state is home to various tribes. Moreover, Arunachal Pradesh is known for its rich cultural heritage.

The museum can collaborate with local artists and artisans by inviting the local artisans of all the tribes and conducting a workshop on famous art practices of Arunachal, such as traditional paper-making, carpet-making techniques of the Monpa tribe, Thangka painting of Buddhist tribes, wooden mask making of Sherdukpen, Khampa, and Monpa, wood carving techniques of Wangcho, bamboo craft and weaving of Tani Clan tribes, etc.

Moreover, the museum can organise musical shows and workshops related to the state's art

and culture. The artist can perform famous folk songs and dances, such as the Snow Lion Dance of the Monpa, the Tapu War Dance of the Adi, the Kaa Kingnara Kingnari (Peacock Dance), and the Thai Khampti tribe, etc.

Thus, collaborations between artists and artisans could be very beneficial, as museums can preserve, document, promote, and encourage local artists, artisans, and communities, and can also engage museum visitors as docents and represent the state's traditional art and culture to the world.

1. Museum Marketing and Public Relations

Museum marketing and public relations have become essential for museums to build and strengthen relationships with their communities and enhance public engagement. It attracts visitors, builds collaborations, raises public awareness and generates publicity, and so forth. Abroad, the famous big museums have a separate department or marketing team that handles matters related to museum marketing and public relations, such as the British Museum in London, which has a marketing department and a marketing post that look after all marketing and communication related to the museum. In India, most museums lack a dedicated department for museum marketing and public relations. The museum's education department manages it. For example, the education department of the National Museum in New Delhi manages its social media handles. If there is an upcoming exhibition, workshop, or other program, the museum updates it on its website.

Moreover, in today's age, one of the easiest ways to advertise, promote, and raise public awareness is through digital platforms such as the museum's website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. Unfortunately, many museums in Arunachal Pradesh do not have their own official website or dedicated social media handles (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, etc.). If the museums of Arunachal created their own websites and social media handles, there would be significant opportunities to reach more people.

Apart from digital platforms, some museums in India also market themselves by collaborating with government travel and tourism departments and by advertising through museum objects, displays, and banners in crowded public places. For instance,

in the Udyog Bhavan, Delhi Metro Station, which is around 800 meters away from the museum, the National Museum, New Delhi, has displayed its objects (Fig. 2). Likewise, the museums in Arunachal Pradesh can also adopt a similar marketing strategy targeting public places or crowded areas for the advertisement of the museum. For example, the Buddhist Gompa (temple) is one of Itanagar's popular tourist destinations among locals and tourists, located, only about 850 meters from the State museum. Thus, displaying a museum collection or a museum signage board in a famous tourist destination could increase visibility and make more people aware of the museum's presence. Recently, the J.N. museum installed a signboard near the main entrance gate of the Gompa.

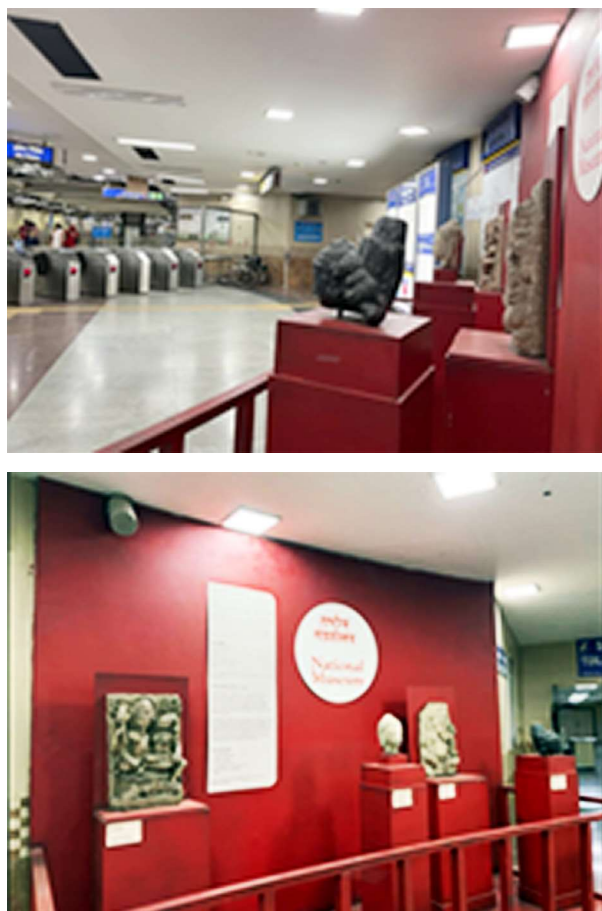


Figure 2: National Museum, New Delhi's replicas displayed at the Udyog Bhawan Metro Station, New Delhi

2. Digitalization of Museums

Digitalisation presents a significant opportunity for the growth of the ethnographic museum in Arunachal Pradesh. We are living in a digital era called the "information age."

Now, digitalisation has reached all sectors, including the museum sector. Primarily due to COVID-19, the pace of digital technology adoption in museums worldwide has increased rapidly. Gradually, museums in India, particularly the national and prominent private museums, also began incorporating digitalisation. However, there is limited use of digital technology in museums of Arunachal Pradesh, such as the Jawaharlal Nehru State Museums, with only a few display screens (TV) on the walls of the Northeast Gallery, screening some information regarding the Northeast Culture of the particular galleries, and a QR scanner near the Dioramas. Similarly, a few display screens are also present at the District Museum Pasighat.

As discussed in the problem sections, the lack of a digital database in the ethnographic museum of Arunachal Pradesh requires urgent attention. Digitalising the museum is not only about documenting the museum collection. The digitalisation of museums offers several features that can enhance their overall growth. It includes a variety of other functions, such as an online museum website, an online collection, an online exhibition, documentation, preservation, a digital repository, interactive displays, and the use of virtual and augmented reality (AR), Multi-touch screens, interactive 3D, interactive touch-screen kiosks, etc. It is the use of digital technology to facilitate museum work, making it easier and more convenient, such as enabling contact between the museum and its visitors. Additionally, digitalisation allows museum visitors to learn in more exciting and engaging ways.

Likewise, the Museums of Arunachal Pradesh also have a lot of excellent prospects in the digitalisation of the museum collection to enhance showcasing the rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh, such as artefacts, dances, folk songs, paintings, Indigenous knowledge system, monuments and cultural heritage sites, etc. In addition to this, the Government of Arunachal has also announced and allocated funds for the digitalisation of the museum. A few such budget/fund allocations (as per government reports) are listed below:

In **2019-2020**, a budget estimate of Rs. 10.00 lakhs was allotted for the documentary

film on J.N. State Museum, Itanagar, for the promotion of material cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh. A budget estimate of Rs. 2 lakhs for renovation with an interactive/innovative gallery at the District Museum, Tezu and a budget estimate of 500.00 lakhs was announced for the Digital Museum at Itanagar (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2019).

In **2021-22**, a budget estimate of Rs. 4.00 lakhs was allotted for security surveillance at the newly developed North-East Galleries of J.N. State Museum, Itanagar, and a budget estimate of Rs. 15.00 lakhs each was allotted for the Innovative Gallery at the District Museum, Seppa. (Phase-I) and Roing. (Phase-I) (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2021).

In **2022-23**, the estimated cost is 30.00 lakhs, and the budget is 15.00 lakhs each for Innovative Gallery at the District Museum, Seppa (Phase-II) and Innovative Gallery at the newly renovated District Museum, Roing (Phase-II). (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2022).

3. Growing numbers of Museums

An additional noteworthy prospect is the growing number of museums in the state. In recent years, several museums have emerged through government, private or in collaboration with communities. For instance, on 23 October 2024 at Nyukmadung, West Kameng District, the **Kameng Culture and Heritage Museum** was inaugurated. This museum is a collaborative efforts of Indian army and local residents, and it was curated by Indian Institute of Heritage (IIH) formerly known as National Museum Institute; **Misum-Miyang Kumsung: An Indigenous Community Museum of Abor/ Adi (Minyong) Tribe** at Komsing Village, Siang District was established in the year 2022, an collaborate initiative of Dr. Uttaran Dutta (Associate Professor at Arizona State University, United States) and village people of Komsing village; at Pangsa village, Chug Valley in West Kameng district, Leike Chomu, 24 years old, **turned the 200 years old ancestors Monpa house into a living museum** (The Arunachal Times, 2024). Likewise, several museums are emerging; a few other examples include the IGU Museum at Roing, established in 2018, and the Karko Ao Museum-cum-Heritage centre in Basar, Leparada District, established in 2024.

Apart from the establishment and growth of new museums in the state. Another noticeable and remarkable change is the expansion of existing museums' collections, galleries, and sections. For example, the J.N. State museum has expanded the museum building with a three-story annexe extension inaugurated on 16 December 2019, built with financial assistance from NEC, GoI (Ghosh, Dey, & Ray, Museums of Arunachal Pradesh, 2023). This annex building represents the 7 Northeast States of India. Similarly, on 1st February 2024, the Research Institute of World's Ancient Traditions, Cultures & Heritage (Riwatch) at Khinjili village, Roing, inaugurated the Northeast and International Block (RIWATCH, 2024). In addition, Chowna Mein, Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, announced to upgrade the World War II museum at Jairampur in Changlang district (Team MyGov, Arunachal Pradesh, 2025).

The following are some of the ongoing and upcoming museum projects in Arunachal Pradesh:

- **Digital museum in Itanagar** to provide information on the state's history and increase tourist footfall (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2022).
- **Forest Museum and Martyr's Memorial** (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2023).
- **NCSM** (National Council of Science Museums) to set up a science centre and a **Space Museum** at **Namsai** and **Dirang** (Press Information Bureau, 2025).
- Proposing the construction of **the Walong War Memorial and Museum to honour the martyrs** (Department of Finance-Planning & Investment, 2026).

Furthermore, several new districts were created in the state, such as Shi-Yomi, Bichom, and Keyi Panyor. All these new districts and existing districts without any museums further expand the scope for future museum development. As a new district emerges, there is increasing potential to establish a district-level museum that can document and represent the local traditional and future museum network and collaborations.

Overall, the new museum and upcoming museum projects present significant potential to enhance promotion, raise awareness, foster

collaboration, improve accessibility, support community engagement, and preserve the cultural heritage of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. All these initiatives also show the growing interest in preserving, promoting, and representing cultural heritage at the local and government levels.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine, discuss, and highlight the problems, challenges, and prospects of the ethnographic museums of Arunachal Pradesh for future growth, particularly with the examples of ethnographic Museums under the Directorate of Research, Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. According to the study, it is found that the main problems faced are in terms of financial constraints and lack of skilled human resources, and followed by challenges in documenting museum collections, representing cultural heritage, display techniques and exhibits, and museum accessibility.

The finding also shows that, although museums face numerous obstacles and challenges, resolving these issues could unlock significant future growth potential. For instance, museums in Arunachal Pradesh could create and bring several opportunities and prospects in preserving cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh by leveraging the digital technologies in their documentation process, promoting museums through digital platforms such as social media, using digitalization in interpretive tools and collaborating with other sectors such as the tourism industry, educational institutes, heritage centres, and community, and creating a desire among people towards museums and involving community in museum activities and programs.

Apart from that, the study also reveals that the museum field in Arunachal Pradesh is growing, with the number of museums in the State increasing. The government and the local people are showing interest in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. For instances the state government has announced to upgrade the World War II museum at Changlang, digitalization of museum at Itanagar and several news museums are setting up by the local community or with the collaboration of the government, NGOs etc. such as Kameng Culture and Heritage

Museum at Nyukmadung, Misum-Miyang Kumsung: An Indigenous Community Museum of Abor/ Adi (Minyong) Tribe at Komsing Village, IGU Museum at Roing, Museums at Research Institute of World's Ancient Traditions Cultures & Heritage (Riwatch) at Khinjili village, Roing, Karko Ao Museum-cum-Heritage centre in Basar etc. Overall, the findings of this study highlight several significant implications for museums in Arunachal Pradesh, including prospects and potential of the museums. Arunachal Pradesh also has significant potential for museums based on the concept of new museology, such as community museums, folk art museums, and eco-museums. Museums of Arunachal Pradesh have immense potential for playing a vital role in preserving the cultural heritage, cultural sustainability and the State's overall development and growth.

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