

Re-imagining museums in India

What is the issue?

There is a transformational shift in our approach to preserve and promote our rich heritage.

How there is a shift in our approach towards museums?

- There is a shift from a museum-centric approach to a **cultural spaces approach**.
- Also we have started to build **museums for specific purposes** rather than relying on general purpose museums.
- We have started to look at museums with a **whole-of-government approach** as well to ensure that museums provide a wholesome experience.

What is Cultural spaces approach?

- Cultural space approach focuses on **integrating the culture into our lives rather than to position them in museums**.
- India is a continuously inhabited civilizational states that continues to thrive.
- The festivals we celebrate, the deities we worship, the food we eat, and the dance and music performances we appreciate are all a testimony to our civilizational ethos.
- Therefore our art, culture and heritage should be continuously witnessed and integrated in our day-to-day activities rather than viewing it in museums.

What are the steps taken to promote Cultural spaces approach?

- Reinstating the brought back stolen heritage from other countries in their original place rather than displaying it in a museum wherever feasible.
- The idol of Goddess Annapurna was returned to its rightful place at Kashi Vishwanath temple, Varanasi.
- Embedding the art and our civilisational heritage in contiguous places such as the new Central Vista Project transcending standalone buildings.

What are Specific purpose museums?

- These museums have unique content and a definite purpose ensuring that rich material is on display and the overall experience is wholesome.
- Some of the specific purpose museums established are as follows
- **10 tribal freedom fighter museums** to recognise the role of over 200 tribal freedom fighters in various revolts and uprisings against colonial rule.
- Birsa Munda museum launched in Ranchi during the first Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas on November 15 2021.
- **Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya** inaugurated on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti.

- The museum is a tribute to every Prime Minister of India since independence. It showcases the contributions they made and the challenges they faced in their tenure.
- **Statue of Unity** - In tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Prime Minister inaugurated the Statue of Unity in October 2018, which also contains a museum that chronicles the various facets of Patel.
- Biplobi Bharat museum in Kolkata.
- Arms and armour museum at the Red Fort.
- A gallery on Gautama Buddha in Delhi.
- A museum on Jammu and Kashmir.

What is Whole-of-government approach?

- The whole of government approach focuses on providing a wholesome experience to all stakeholders.
- The aim is to **portray a rich and diverse blend** of the cultural, religious and scientific achievements that our civilisation has witnessed over the years.
- These museums do not just lie under the control of the Ministry of Culture.
- For example - Railway museums, the crafts and textiles museums, and the food museum.
- 25 science cities, centres and museums under the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) backed by an MoU with CSIR.
- NCSM is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture.

What are the efforts made to modernise and upgrade the museums?

- Use of Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality
- Widen public access through modernisation and digitisation of collections and exhibitions.
- Ministry of Culture organised a first-of-its-kind Global Summit on 'Reimagining Museums in India' in February 2022.
- Learnings from the summit are incorporated to devise a blueprint for the development of new museums.
- An Indian Institute of Heritage is set up as a world class university to address these challenges in due course of action.

Reference

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-concerted-effort-in-re-imagining-museums/article65422237.ece>