

HINTS
ON
MUSEUM EDUCATION

WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED

By

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An Appeal

to the good sense, broadmindedness, and
unprejudiced independent judgment
of the Authorities in charge

of

Museums

devoted entirely to the relics of antiquity
for

making over big images, walls, pillars, slabs, etc.
to

the principal cities of India

for

display in public places

and thus sparing room for

Exhibits appertaining to health and hygiene;
modern instruments, machines,

and scientific appliances;

principal products of the three kingdoms,
useful arts, handicrafts, manufactures, etc., etc.

so as to transform their existing museums
into proper

EDUCATIONAL MUSEUMS

May the Supreme Father vouchsafe light and strength
to all concerned

is the humble yet fervent prayer of the author !

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to those, —

whose *reason* is free from prejudices;

whose *knowledge* is not enshrouded with
wrong inclinations;

whose *conscience* is not dominated by the
influence of others;

who entertain strong *fellow-feeling* for all
persons;

who believe that they possess *very limited*
knowledge;

and who are actuated by the spirit of
self-sacrifice.

Author.

PREFACE

Museum Education is a somewhat novel idea, and the reader may pertinently ask what it means. Museum Education, as the name implies, is the diffusion of general knowledge by means of what are called Educational Museums, as distinguished from the existing public museums. The latter are, generally, store-houses of objects whose public utility and educative value are small. They have been founded with a different object. An Educational Museum properly so called, on the other hand, should contain exhibits covering all departments of life, with special emphasis on the modern arts and sciences, and important industries and discoveries, all arranged and classified in such a way that they can be examined at close quarters and actually handled under the supervision and guidance of a competent guide or instructor. While the existing public museums of India have, no doubt, great cultural value to students of antiquity and may be maintained where there is a superabundance of funds, the establishment of Educational Museums adapted to supply the requirements of students and the general public are the crying need of the moment. This book is intended to be an appeal for the establishment of Educational Museums at all the important centres of education.

2. The education in a large number of useful subjects by means of museum is such a vast affair that a regular

treatise on it would cover more than 5,000 pages. But as I am an old man of 79, I could not dare to undertake such a big work. So I remain satisfied with publishing only "Hinton Museum Education." Instead of publishing such a big and costly book, it is better to publish cheap pamphlets on different subjects, which will be helpful in studying the exhibits.

3. The first museum in India was started at Calcutta in 1814 and it has developed largely in the course of 124 years. It is a matter of pride to its conductors that it can boast of a stock of 300,000 geological specimens, 48,000 rock-specimens, 27,000 fossils, 468 meteorites; and large collections in the zoological and ethnological sections. It claims to possess archaeological collections, far larger than any other museum in the country. It has a large stock of old pictures and various industrial manufactures. Though so rich in the collections appertaining to these branches of knowledge, the museum has unfortunately taken no active steps, as yet, towards providing exhibits suited to the requirements of students and the general public.

Its one ambition appears to be to collect as many exhibits as it can get hold of, representing a single subject. For instance, while it is already in possession of as many as 300,000 specimens of geology, its budget provides substantial funds every year for making further additions to the existing stock. It is spending Rs. 29,000 on relics of antiquity, to increase its already vast stock on the subject; and likewise something like Rs. 50,000 on adding to its zoological and ethnological sections.

4. There are, at present, four kinds of museums to be found in India:—(1) Local archaeological museums, founded by Government on the sites of excavations; (2) Museums attached to college laboratories for the study of practical subjects, such as, pathology, biology, geology, agriculture, etc.; (3) Archaeological museums started by Indian States or by private societies; (4) Museums of a mixed nature, holding old relics, as well as, exhibits on one or more of the following subjects:—zoology, geology, ethnology, industry, fine arts (as pictures), etc. I have no quarrel with museums of the first two kinds; but I have a serious complaint against those of the 3rd and 4th kinds, and that for the following reasons:—

(1) Their chief object is the display of their stocks and not imparting knowledge to the visitors.

(2) Consequently they do not seek the co-operation of educational institutions and consult them with regard to their requirements.

(3) They measure their utility by the number of their visitors; they take pride in their collections of relics of antiquity, animals, geological or ethnological specimens, etc.

(4) In making their collections they ignore the claims of subjects of vital importance, such as, Eugenics, Maternity, Childwelfare, Dietary, Temperance, Health and Hygiene, etc. Well-selected exhibits on these subjects are obviously of far greater educative value than the exhibits, meant for advanced students on geology, mineralogy, botany, zoology, ethnology, fine arts, archaeology, etc.

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(5) It goes without saying that it is not the duty of museums to impart regular instruction to the visitors on the various subjects represented by the exhibits, as is done in schools and colleges. My humble suggestion is that they should make arrangements, also for display of as many articles under each subject as are necessary for imparting *general knowledge* of them to laymen and to school-students. If they can provide exhibits of advanced nature on these subjects for the benefit of technical students, they are welcome to do so. For a proper Educational Museum, the *General Principle* should be, that they should be so organised as to be in a position to impart *general knowledge* on all useful subjects to the visitors.

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