

PRESS RELEASE

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Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya Centenary (1922–2022)

CSMVS Mumbai – A museum by the people, for the people



CSMVS – A brief history of a 100-year-old people’s museum

On 10th January 2022 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) completes 100 years of its glorious journey — a landmark, not only in the history of the Museum but for the cultural movement of the country. The occasion is also significant to analyse the past and to look towards the future — making a road map for the bicentenary.

The Museum opened its doors to the public on 10th January 1922 but the idea germinated in the year 1904 by a few enthusiastic citizens who wished to give the economic city of Bombay a gift of cultural legacy.

“Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) is no longer a storehouse of art and antiquities but an important centre of culture and education that touches all aspects of human life. This is a cultural, as well as a social space and also a meeting place for communities to engage in dialogue and exchange of ideas. The Museum plays a direct role in preserving and enriching the community in which it is sustained, that places it in an important position of trust in relation to its audiences, donors, partners, co-existing organisations, sponsors, and funders. As the Museum evolves and grows in popularity, it becomes more accountable to the different communities living in the city.”

- Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Director General, CSMVS

A people's idea creates the Museum

In 1904, a resolution was passed by the Government of Bombay Presidency and a committee was formed to determine the feasibility of having a public Museum in Bombay. Some of the eminent citizens of the city — Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla and Sir Vithaldas Thackeray, were members of this committee. Henry Cousens (the then-Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Western Circle) and Lord Lamington, the then Governor of Bombay were extremely supportive of the proposal. It was proposed that the Museum of Art and Archaeology should be combined with a Museum of Science and Natural History and Industrial Art. The members of the Board also desired that **the Museum should inspire and give stimulus to visitors, and especially to the children and youth of India, and that the main objective of the Museum should be educational.**

At a public meeting held in August 1905 at the Town Hall, it was resolved that a Public Museum and Library would be built to commemorate the proposed visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to the city of Bombay. The meeting was attended by luminaries like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Justice Chandavarkar, Justice Badruddin Tyabji, Narottamdas Gokuldas, David Sassoon, Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Sir Kikabhai Premchand, among others. The Government agreed to the proposal for a museum and provided its present site, a semi-circular plot of land aptly called the “Crescent site” on the condition that the citizens of Bombay create an autonomous body and undertake the responsibility of running the Museum. The Museum thus is an autonomous body not supported by the government but fully supported by public-private partnerships. The Foundation Stone of the Museum was laid by the HRH the Prince of Wales on 11th November 1905, and the Museum was named the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India.

In 1915, during World War I, the Museum building was used as a military hospital and named Lady Hardinge War Hospital. The galleries of the building were temporarily converted into hospital wards to serve the wounded soldiers. It was later used as a Children's Welfare Centre. It was only around the mid-1920s that the Trustees of the Museum could take charge of the main building and start hosting various collections in the Museum premises. The following year (1921) was geared towards acquiring collections.

The Museum opened to the public

The Museum was formally opened for the public on 10th January 1922. During the inauguration ceremony of the Museum, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees Mr. J.T. Brander mentioned, *“Museum should be largely an institution of foundation for promoting research in all branches of science and knowledge and not only a museum of curiosities for the sightseer.”*

The Honourable Lady Lloyd (wife of His Excellency Sir G.A. Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay), commented on the occasion, *“If those functions are adequately performed by a museum, the stranger who visits it will have the history of its community unrolled before his eyes, he will be presented with a fascinating picture of the natural surroundings in which the community lives, of the varieties of its climate, and its achievements in every sphere of art and science. Once such respect is achieved - the demand for a great Museum must arise and*

those who do not support it are depriving the credit of the community. Fortunately, here, in Bombay, there have not been lacking generous supporters of this Museum.”

Today when we are celebrating the completion of 100 years, we believe that we catered to this concern and have become the **Museum of ideas, research, and knowledge dissemination** rather than just confined to “*only a museum of curiosities for the sightseer.*”

Building a diverse collection for people

The initial years of the Museum were the years of institutional building and chalking out the road map for the future. Even before the formal inauguration of the Museum, many individuals and institutions of the city of Bombay came forward and gifted collections to the Museum or gave them on permanent loan. **The first object came to the Museum in the year 1906** — a plaster cast head of the Buddha created and donated by Lockwood Kipling.

The priceless artefacts from the Buddhist site of Mirpurkhas, excavated by renowned archaeologist Henry Cousens in 1909 are an important part of the Museum collection. Seth Purushottam Mavji’s collection of antiquities and miniatures was purchased by the Trustees in 1915, and antiquities acquired from the Archaeological Survey of India have enriched the grand collection of the Museum.

The year 1922 was marked with the bequest received by Sir Ratan Tata. The encyclopaedic collection built up by Sir Ratan Tata was displayed in his house at York House London. The collection was bequeathed to this Museum according to his will and was executed by his wife Navajbai, who not only helped the Museum to bring the collection from London but also helped for its proper display in the Museum. In the subsequent years, in 1933, the collection of Sir Dorab Tata, the elder brother of Sir Ratan Tata came to the Museum as a bequest. Besides outstanding Indian antiquities such as textiles, arms, bronzes, and paintings, the Tata collection also comprises of European, East-Asian, and Southeast Asian art as part of this magnanimous gift. Both the collections laid the foundation of **the encyclopaedic nature of the Museum making it perhaps one of the few private Museums having such a diverse world collection in India.** The Tata collections also complete 100 years in 2022 and the Museum plans to organize an exhibition dedicated to the collection. The Museum believes that culture dissolves boundaries and celebrates the human spirit of creativity.

In the year 1923, The Natural History Section was jointly established by the Bombay Natural History Society and the Trustees of the Museum. The Society brought their collection to the Museum. An attractive collection of the minerals of Bombay Island gathered by Mr. Jayme Ribeiro was also donated to the Museum. Dr. Salim Ali, the famous ornithologist, was the first Guide lecturer of this section. A significant collection of antiquities was lent to the Museum by the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. In the year 1928, the Trustees acquired the collection of decorative arts from the J.J. School of Art.

Over the years, as the collection of the Museum increased, there was a need for more space and the Museum had to build extensions to the original building in the year 1938.

Over the past century, the Museum's wide-ranging collections have grown to about **70,000 objects, telling the human story, especially of the Indian subcontinent, right from pre-historic time to the present.** A multitude of other collections bequeathed to the Museum by individual collectors enriched the repository of the Museum to a great extent. The collection includes the gracious gifts received from Sir Akbar Hydari, Alma Latifi, Amravati Gupta, Karl Khandalavala, Veena Shroff, Dr. Pheroza Godrej and Pauline Rohatgi, Ernst and Mischa Jenkel, and Kuldip Singh. Catering to the needs of contemporary art lovers, Jehangir Nicholson's collection of works of modern and contemporary arts from India is also housed at the Museum premises. This collection is currently on a 15-year loan to the Museum and it has added a modern and contemporary dimension to the Museum's collection.

CSMVS continues to collect objects and its curators are actively engaged in researching the collections. The findings of these researches are shared with the visitors through the gallery displays and temporary exhibitions, high-quality publications, public lectures, events, and through social media.

Creating and sharing knowledge

The Museum has not only been a repository of artefacts but a centre for research and education. Since the beginning, the Museum has played a very crucial role in sharing knowledge and education to the public through various initiatives. Art historians from all over the world have consulted and visited the Museum for research work. The Museum publishes a Research Journal annually, having revived the former Prince of Wales Research Bulletin after a gap of 43 years, to encourage original research among senior and young scholars in the field of art history and archaeology. **The Museum also publishes exhibition catalogues, collection-based catalogues, research publications, and children's books.**

Since its inception, education has been at the heart of the Museum's pursuit. In 2019, the Museum opened Mumbai's first Children's Museum. Nestled amidst a grove of trees on the same campus, the Children's Museum is a contemporary structure offering a wide range of activities and programmes for children including exhibitions, workshops, activities. It aims at helping children think critically about their world around. The Museum's flagship programme — Museum on Wheels, takes exhibitions across Maharashtra and Gujarat to schools and educational institutions in a bus. In 2020, a second bus has been added to the fleet ensuring that the initiative reaches out to nearly 1 million children across India.

In the context of children's education,

"The whole idea was to create a separate and independent space for children who unfortunately have limited access to informal cultural spaces in the city where they can learn to experience and understand what is unfamiliar to them while acquiring new sets of values and new frames of thought in harmony with their surroundings.

CSMVS Children's Museum will be 'for the children, by the children'. It will be a space for child's curiosity and enhance and reinstate the nature-culture bond that is fast vanishing from our busy city life. It is our responsibility as a major cultural institution of Mumbai to think about children in a futuristic manner and establish a space for better engagement with histories and the arts."

- Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Director General, CSMVS

Exhibitions and a global approach

The Museum's role as the custodian of the country's heritage has been carried out sincerely and wholeheartedly for all these years. There has been an exchange of objects, exchange of ideas, and exchange of knowledge with museums from all over India and also with museums abroad.

The Museum collaborates with various other institutes and organises several exhibitions and lectures. The Museum was once selected as a nodal institution for the Festival of India exhibitions. It also presented exhibitions on Indian culture in Japan, Sweden, Mauritius, the USA, and the UK. To bring out the world cultures for our visitors, the Museum has initiated many landmark international exhibitions in collaborations, some examples such as *Mummy the Inside Story*, *Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia* with the British Museum, London, *Indian Life and Landscape*, *Kalighat Paintings* with the V&A, London, and *Shakespeare First Folio* with British Library, London, *Tabiyat: Medicine and Healing* with the Wellcome Collection, London, *India and the World: A History in Nine Stories* with British Museum, London and 24 other Indian partners, *India & Netherlands in the Age Rembrandt* with Rijksmuseum, Netherlands. Exhibitions presenting collections from the rich repository of the Museum have also been organised over the years to showcase objects that are in the Museum's reserves.

A Green Museum

CSMVS is conscious of its role as a global institute and is dedicated to discharging its responsibility towards preserving the environment. **It has a Green policy that provides a framework for the development of Green practices.** This steps deep into employee habits and is realised through harnessing solar energy, LED lighting, water conservation, and harvesting, no-plastic approach, and waste management. In 2019, the Museum received the highest Platinum rating under Existing Building Category from the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) for global leadership in environmental management. CSMVS is probably the first Museum in the world located in a heritage building, in a heritage precinct to achieve such a distinction. The project has been supported by the Rotary Club of Bombay, Tata Steel, and Tata Chemicals. The clean Mumbai foundation also contributed equipment for the project.

A museum of the people, by the people, and for the people

Speaking rightly about the spirit of the people of Bombay now Mumbai, the Prince of Wales remarked at the time of the foundation laying ceremony of the Museum "...*Today's ceremony is a practical proof of that public spirit of the people of Bombay about which I have so often heard...I hope that they, and all you who have helped to bring this public-spirited idea in a fulfilment will live long to see and enjoy what under wise and*

experienced direction may prove to be one of the most important beneficial institutions of Bombay.” **The Museum has been built and sustained through grants and donations from the citizens of Bombay since its inception.** This public spirit of the people of Mumbai is still a driving force for the Museum. The Museum received its first donation, a sum of three lakh rupees, from one of the city’s eminent citizens Mr. Carimbhoy Ibrahim. In its 100 years’ journey, the Museum has received generous donations from many individuals, philanthropists, and corporate houses in the city such as Tata Trusts, Premchand Roychand Group, Bank of America, Citi, Tata Consultancy Services, Hemendra Kothari Foundation, Hikal, among several, and individual patrons like Dr. Devangana Desai, Dr. Pheroza Godrej, Harsha and Sudha Dehejia, among many. The Extension Wing was renovated to create a space for the conservation lab, galleries, and visiting exhibitions with the support of the Premchand Roychand family in 2002. With the support of Bank of America, the Museum opened in 2019 city’s first Children’s Museum. On the philosophy of – “if you cannot come to Museum, Museum will come to you”, the Museum launched two mobile buses to reach out to the city and rural areas of Maharashtra with the support of Citi.

Philanthropy is at the soul of this city, the biggest strength of the economic capital of India. This philanthropy has been awarded to this Museum in various ways — in the form of financial support, collection, intellectual inputs, goodwill, and so on. The legacy still continues. Even at the time of the most difficult economic slowdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, several friends and well-wishers extended themselves to provide financial and moral support to the Museum, by adopting objects from the Museum’s collection and pledging for their care and study. This support not only enabled the Museum to sustain financially but also reinvigorated the spirits of the people working in the culture sector, in times of such despair.

Looking ahead – a futuristic approach

Over the years things have changed — the city of Bombay was renamed Mumbai and the Prince of Wales Museum has been renamed as the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya. The Museum too has evolved, and, in these 100 years, the Museum has always striven to fulfil its original aim to create awareness and sensitivity towards heritage through its acquisitions, research, and creation of visitor-friendly experiences for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. The Museum has been transformed into a world-class visitor space in its recent decades. It is widely visited by the diverse Indian demographic, local and across states, as well as visitors from all over the world.

Today, it is one of the most dynamic cultural spaces known for best museum practices, international collaborations and innovative projects. Over a million visitors every year experience a sense of joy and pride, and gain an understanding of human history as they stroll through the Museum’s galleries and beautiful heritage garden. Since the pandemic has been raging since over a year ago, CSMVS has provided many joyful and enriching experiences to its audiences online; the Museum played its role in healing society.

Why is the CSMVS so special? It is a world set in its own beautiful garden— a museum to enthrall children and grown-ups, residents and tourists. Is there another museum where you can walk so easily from the Indus Valley and an edict of Ashoka, through great Hindu, Buddhist and Jain

sculptures, past Indian miniatures and ancient Assyrian reliefs, Chinese ceramics and Japanese carvings to European paintings and the art of modern India? If there is, I don't know it. For a hundred years the people who made Mumbai into one of the commercial hubs of the modern world also enriched its Museum, and so the collection of the CSMVS today reflects the whole life — past and present — of this global city. And like the city, the Museum is part of a rich network of research and exchange, which every year brings to the citizens of Mumbai the cultures of the world. To visitors from abroad, the CSMVS at 100, with its conservation centre and Children's Museum, its exhibition and educational programmes — not least the Museum on Wheels — looks like a museum uniquely well equipped to serve its city, its country, and the future.

- Neil MacGregor, Eminent Art Historian and Former Director of the British Museum

The Museum opened its doors to the public 100 years ago. Standing on the foundation of this strong legacy, the Museum looks to the future with greater resolve. The 100-year history of the Museum is not only the history of its collection, the artefacts that record human development and that of the natural world, but is also a history of the exchange of ideas, knowledge and cultures that have persisted through time. The definition of a museum is now not just confined to the collection and preservation of art objects but goes beyond it, as **CSMVS has over the years, seeking to propagate ideas of respecting all cultures, bringing significant issues to the global stage — raising questions and discussing relevant issues — thus fulfilling its civic role the world today.**

Significant projects and initiatives at CSMVS will mark this historic year of 2022, launching us into the future. **For a full line up of exhibitions, books, and research and public initiatives, and programmes that will be organised through the year (on-site and digital), please get in touch with our teams.**

Please contact us for more information, images, and to coordinate editorial stories, interviews, and listings:

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