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Political changes: Challenges of museums in Nepal and museum training

Introduction

Museums are barometers of social and cultural change. The future role of museums in local and global cultural contexts are being questioned and radically re-shaped. Museums find themselves in a dynamically shifting realm where time-honored methods are becoming outdated and ineffective. To survive and thrive, museums must adapt to meet the needs of their audiences while not losing sight of their missions. Our initial museum stakeholder discussions help identify the challenges specific to each institution and provide a critical framework for moving toward innovative solutions.

Museum audiences are increasing in number, diversity, and in their expectations. The wide availability of in-depth information and media has created a generation of museum visitors that craves sophisticated new experiences and ideas. Museums increasingly face the challenge of maintaining scholarly and professional standards while also being compelling and entertaining enough to compete with their audience's other numerous leisure time options. During our planning process, audience engagement concepts are vetted and kept in the forefront of discussions.

Major Political Changes in Nepal

Within last 2-3 years of time frame Nepali people have experienced many changes in the field of politics. In fact, there were vast changes have been seen in main stream of political organization, government mechanism, bureaucratic system and security sector. The main political changes in field of politics have been discussed in subsequent paragraphs;

- **Constitution of Nepal 2015** This is the present governing Constitution of Nepal. Nepal is governed according to the Constitution which came into effect on Sept 20, 2015, replacing the Interim Constitution of 2007. The constitution of Nepal is divided into 35 parts, 308 Articles and 9 Schedules. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 defines Nepal as a federal democratic republic organized three levels of government – federal, state, and local. Henceforth, state is divided into seven provinces and local is divided into 77 districts & 753 local levels (including six metropolises, 11 sub-metropolises, 276 municipalities and 460 village councils). The Head of state is the President and the Prime Minister holds the position of the Head of executive.
- **Local Level Election** The 2017 Nepalese local elections were held in Nepal in three phases on 14 May, 28 June and 18 September in 6 metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities and 460 village councils. It was the first local level election to be held since the promulgation of the 2015 constitution.

- **Legislative and Provincial Elections** These elections were held in Nepal in two phases on 26 November and 7 December 2017 to elect the 275 members of the fourth House of Representatives, the lower house of the Federal Parliament of Nepal. The election was held alongside the first provincial elections for the seven provincial assemblies to elect 550 members.
- **Federal Legislative** The Federal Parliament of Nepal is the federal and supreme legislative body of Nepal. It is a bicameral federal legislature that consists of the National Assembly as upper house and the House of Representatives, as lower house. According to the Constitution of Nepal 2015, Nepal has a two chamber Parliament. The House of Representatives has 275 members elected for a five year term, 165 from single-seat constituencies and 110 from a proportional party list. The National Assembly has 59 members elected for six years term. Among the 59 members three members are nominated by the President. The remaining 56 are elected from 7 provinces equally (Eight each) including 3 females 1 Dalits and 1 from differently abled groups.
- **Federal Government** The Council of Ministers or Federal Executive exercises authority over the Federal Government of Nepal. The Prime Minister is the head of the Council of Ministers. The incumbent Prime Minister is Mr. Khadga Prasad Oli from Nepal Communist Party, he has taken the charge of his post on 15 February 2018. According to the Constitution of Nepal, the Prime Minister is appointed by the President of Nepal. The President of Nepal on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of Nepal forms a council of ministers consisting of members not exceeding twenty five in number from among the members of the Federal parliament on the basis of the principle of inclusion.
- **Provincial Legislature** Each province has a unicameral provincial legislature, varying in size according to the population of the province. The members are elected through first-past-the-post voting and party-list proportional representation for a term of five years, unless dissolved sooner. The most recent provincial election was held on 24 November and 7 December, 2017. The alliance of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) won a majority in six provinces, while the alliance of Federal Socialist Forum, Nepal and Rastriya Janata Party Nepal won a majority in one province. The total members of 7 x state assemblies will be 550.
- **Provincial Governments** The seven provinces of Nepal are governed by provincial governments which form the second layer of government, between the federal government and the local government. The head of the provincial government is the Chief Minister, who is the parliamentary party leader of the party with the majority or the highest number of seats in the assembly. Chief Minister will appoint the ministers for the provincial government as per constitution.
- **Local Level Government** The local level has been divided into 77 districts & 753 local levels (including six metropolises, 11 sub-metropolises, 276 municipalities and 460 village counties). These 753 local units are known as the local level government in Nepal. A total of 6,743 wards are formed under these 753 local levels. This enables them to formulate laws to implement these powers.

Provision on constitution and law in terms of museum management

The new constitution of Nepal 2015 has mentioned the principle of state on part 4. There are mentioned about the “**Policies regarding social and cultural transformation**” on article 51. There is also mentioned about **Right to language and culture**. So, it seems that the constitution has given priority to

culture. According to constitution of Nepal the responsibility to run museum has been given to federal, provincial and local government.

Most of the big museums are run by government in Nepal. However, there is no any specific museum law in Nepal. So far most of the government museums are running under cultural ministry. The cabinet will approve the rules regarding museum whenever there is requirement. Some of the government museums are placed on committee system. Those museums will get limited autonomous for their conduction. There is a Ancient Heritage Law 1956 in Nepal. However, this law will only deal with the heritages of more than 100 years.

On other side private museums has been registered on District Administrative Office and Office of Company Registrar. There is no any regulatory body to control the private museums. The government has no any record of private and community museums so far. So, the lack of museum law is a main problem of Nepal to regulate all kinds of private and government own museums. Currently government is doing homework to regulate government museum. The homework is going on following direction:

- In Kathmandu valley only three government museums (including national museum) will be under Ministry of Culture. These museums will be regulated by Department of Archeology.
- Rest of the government museums of Kathmandu valley will be under respective municipalities where they are situated.
- Presently running regional museums of government in various region will be under provincial government.
- Rest community museums of government will be under respective municipalities and village councils.
- However, the regulatory body of private museums of country is not clear yet.

Challenges of Museum in Nepal

The museums of Nepal are facing many challenges in general and on the context of political changes in country, which are listing below:

General challenges and problems of museum in Nepal;

- Lack of resources and funds.
- Natural and manmade disasters.
- Lack of trained museum man power.
- Lack of proper Infrastructure of museum.
- Lack of diversification on museum exhibition.
- Lack on conservation of artifacts and monuments.
- Lack of proper storage.
- Inadequate security system.
- Climate change issue.
- No any organization for museum training.
- Digitalization system has not adopted yet.

Challenges and problems on the context of political changes;

- Fewer viewers in museum, no strategy, no plan and project to attract more visitors.
- Least priority of government for development of museum.
- No concrete Law, policy and rule about design and management of museum.
- Lack of awareness about museum among community.
- Lack of political commitment.
- No regulatory body for private museums.
- Bureaucrats are less aware about museum and lack of knowledge about museology.
- Government museums are divided in many categories.
- Risk of job security of employees of government museums.
- Lack of coordination among different regulatory bodies and concerning ministry.

Training of Museum Staffs

Staff training provides museum personnel with relevant skills, a better understanding of museum theory and practice and greater insight into musicological methods and techniques. A staff training policy forms part of a larger museum management policy. The policy development process will depend on circumstances, staff and available resources. The ultimate goal of a staff training policy is to have fully trained staff who can ensure continuity in the museum's operations and can implement sound musicological practice. Training may be required for:

- Museum operations and administration.
- Documentation procedures.
- Packing and handling procedures.
- Care of collections and Conservation.
- Staff and site management.
- Marketing, Public Relations and Evaluation.
- Interpretation and education programs.
- Exhibition design.
- Financial planning and fundraising.
- Digitization of collections.
- Museum security.
- Cultural planning.

Training needs may be met through:

- Workshops.
- Seminars.
- In-house training sessions.
- In-house library of books and periodicals on museology.

- Conferences.
- Internships.
- Visits and study tours.
- Meetings of regional museums groups.
- Audio-visual education kits.
- University/college courses.
- Museums studies programs.
- Professional exchanges.
- Active participation in professional associations.
- Use of information technology and professional literature to keep abreast of professional developments and policies in direct and related areas.

The ICTOP and Museum Training

The International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) was founded in 1968. The ICTOP's mission in ICOM is to encourage and promote training programmes at university level in all regions of the world. Further and equally important to ICTOP work, they support training programmes for all museum workers as part of a lifelong education and professional development whether by associations, institutions or other delivery agencies. ICTOP's primary aim is to promote training and professional development and to establish standards for museum personnel throughout their careers. ICTOP also acts as an advisor for the establishment of syllabi for personnel training and works closely with other ICOM Committees to achieve its goals.

Now, the question has been raised by museum experts are the training running by ICTOP is enough?? Is there need to modify the training procedure of ICTOP?? Keeping in view of these questions I would like to suggest some points regarding the training of museum specially related to ICTOP:

- ICTOP should increase the number of training/workshop.
- The training workshop should design for high level management position too.
- The ICOM-ICTOP should conduct museum related seminars/conferences for high level management.
- The ICOM-ICTOP should clearly define its strategy, vision and mission of the training.
- The ICOM-ICTOP should design some of its training to produce middle level trainer too.
- ICTOP should have close coordination with ICOM-ITC.

Conclusion

The globalization of culture and the immediacy of social media and electronic communications have significantly advanced the way museums present their subject matter for their audiences. Evolving exhibition techniques allow adapting museums to present multiple viewpoints and to educate and challenge visitors as never before. In today's highly interconnected culture, Verner Johnson has led creative design teams that are able to find innovative ways to further engage museum visitors.

Today's best museums not only offer unique, social, and meaningful experiences, but are often the new cultural hubs for their communities. Museum leadership staff, boards, and donors increasingly see the potential of architecture as the primary tool for creating landmarks and for marketing the identity of their institution and their geographic area. Verner Johnson is a specialist firm focused on creating iconic, yet affordable, designs appropriate for each client, whether an existing or entirely new cultural institution.

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