



Patna Museum-the Cultural Heritage of Bihar

Ambika Roy*, Priyanka*, Ratna priyadarshini*, Jaismin Kantha**

*B.AIII-2007-2010, Honours, Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna

**Lecturer, Department of History, Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna

Patna Museum situated at Buddha Margh Patna, is one of the best tourist attraction of Bihar. Patna museum is committed to impart a scientific vision to understand the evolution of history. It also provides an opportunity to have a glimpse of artistic excellence of the past. Hence, it is an important academic institution of higher learning and a centre of dissemination of knowledge. It was built during British rule in India and was opened to public in the year 1917. Some extremely rare and valuable artefacts are housed in the Patna Museum. One can not appreciate the Indian art and history of the land without going through the collections of this museum. The museum includes collection in stone sculpture, bronze sculpture, terracotta gallery, patliputra terracotta and some of the rare collections that we would not find anywhere else in the country. The museum also possess is some of the gifts and collection of Dr.Rajendra Prasad. The different collections of paintings mainly the thankas, patna kalam paintings are of magnificent beauty. In the art and war weapon gallery thus are collections of very old art objects and weapons like Humayun's dagger. The research was carried on by the help of primary data such as books provided by the museum.

Research work is based on informations collected by internet and personal interaction with the authorities of the museum. Through this project we have tried to reveal certain unknown facts to the public and have tried also to reveal the importance of museum in Bihar as its cultural repository.

Key words: Patna Kalam, Stone sculpture, Bronze sculpture, Terracotta gallery.

Introduction : Patna Museum has much to offer and showcase to its people. Home to the priceless relics in the country dating back to the Buddha period, Patna Museum gives us a peep into that era and beyond. It is a multipurpose museum and it houses about 57,000 coins of historical significance with an added collection of 22,000 coins. It was built in the style of the Mughal and Rajput architecture.

There are relics of the Pala and Sena dynasties, items of the first world war, and a few rare collection of art objects of paintings and instruments. The 200 million years old tree trunk, the statue of yakshini is around 3,000 years old and the velvet gown is sixty years old. The 10th century A.D. statue of Buddha in black basalt is the finest example of the Pala art and the casket containing the ashes of lord Buddha is of immense significance for the Buddhists who visit

the museum with this religious sentiment. The most treasured possession of the Patna Museum is the 16m long fossilized tree. The Patna Museum houses a First World War cannon. It contains the fine collection of the paintings belonging to the British rule, portraying day to day life scenes. It also has the paintings related to the first president of India – Dr. Rajendra Prasad. The Museum reveals the great history and heritage of Bihar.

Objectives :

- To bring forth the facts hitherto unknown to the public.
- To reveal the cultural importance of Patna museum in Bihar.
- To identify small initiatives taken by the government for the enrichment of museum.

Methodology :

- Research is based on primary data.
- Information collected from the internet and personal interaction with the authority of the museum.

How to reach patna museum ?



History of Patna Museum :

The state museum was formally established in the year 1917 by Sir Edward Gait, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa. After the partition of Bihar from Bengal, a necessity to establish a museum was felt. Thus the museum was declared open to the public by the Governor Sir. Hugh Stephenson on 5th March 1929.

Architectural style of the Building :

The building of Patna Museum was built in the Indo-sarcenic style. It is one of the finest examples of museum architecture in India.

Collections at Patna Museum :



Stone Sculpture Collection :

Introduction : In the stone sculpture gallery there is collection from Mauryan to till Pala period.

Mauryan period sculpture – They are mainly sand stone sculpture, and are grey in colour. The sculptures are three dimensional. Some of the examples of Mauryan period sculptures are Chauri Bearer, Jain Tirthankara, and Bull capital.



Gupta period sculptures – In Gupta period sandstone continues as the medium of sculpting but compared to Mauryan period is less in use. In this period the images are not three dimensional. Some of the examples of Gupta period sculpture and statues are Lord Ganesha, dancing Kartikeya, and Lord Mahavira.



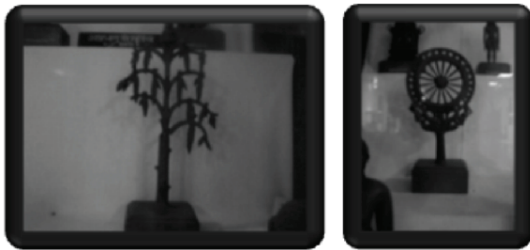
Pala period sculptures - In the Pala period, the medium of construction changes to black-basalt. The sculptures in this group varied in nature and comprise of Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jaina images. Some of the examples are carved images of Ganga, Yamuna, and Avlokiteswar.





Bronze sculpture collection :

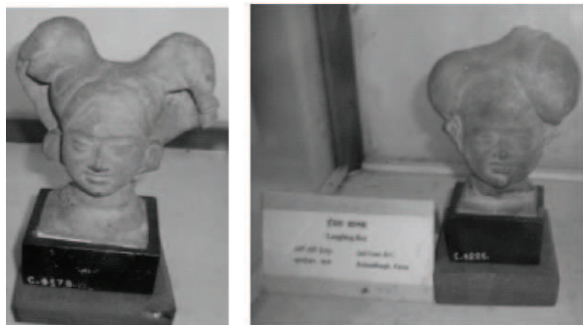
The museum possesses the best collection of bronze, or eight alloys better known as Astadhātu images in India. These bronzes were discovered from chausa (Buxar), Kurkihar (Gaya), Nalanda, Belwa (Saran), Sonapur (Orissa), and Negapattam (Tamil Nadu). Some of the examples are of Dharmachakra, Kalpavriksha and images of Jain Tirthankara.



Terracotta collection :

The terracotta collection of the museum is superb and famous worldwide. The gallery is divided into three periods Mauryan, Gupta and Pala period each with its own distinctive features.

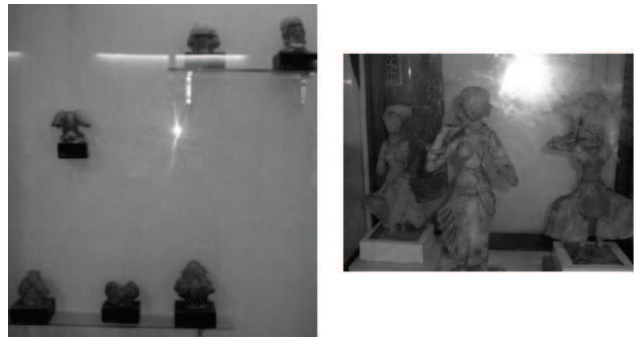
Mauryan period terracotta – The Mauryan period includes three dancing damsels, the laughing boy and the smiling girl from the ancient city of Patliputra which is very rare piece and is technically superior in its execution.



Gupta period terracotta – The Museum has some very good collection of Gupta terracotta from Kausambi. A beautiful plaque depicting Ramayana scene from chausa is an example of excellent classical Gupta art – denoting the revival of Hinduism during Gupta period.

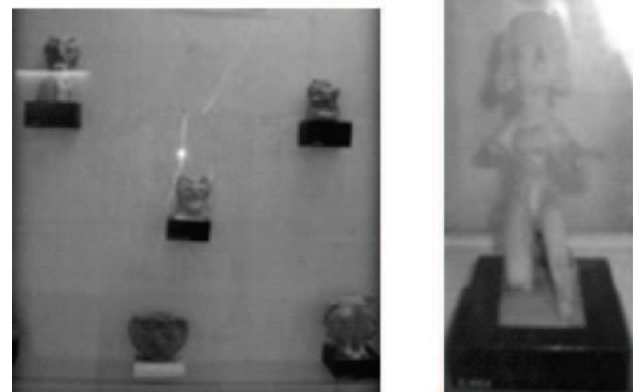


Pala period terracotta – The large size plaques from Paharpur (Bangladesh) depict the technical skill of the Pala period. There is a good collection of terracotta seals and sealing from Vaishali, Nalanda and Dharawat.



Patliputra terracotta collection :

In Patliputra terracotta figurine female are more numerous than male in both "conventional and time bound type". Figurine with fully covered body has slim, well disciplined body with the most delicate touch in modeling of the chest. Some of the best examples are female heads and women with modeled breast.



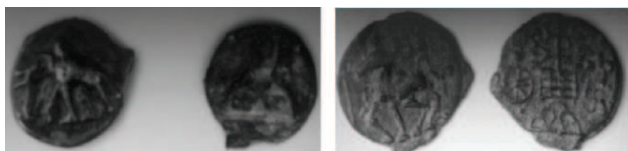
Collection of paintings :

The Patna Museum in its art repository has miniature paintings, thankas and numerous decorative and miscellaneous art objects. The collection consists of painting on paper, from different schools, such as the Rajasthan, Mughal, Pahari, Delhi school and Patna Kalam. These paintings range in date from the beginning of the 16th to the end of the 19th century A.D.



Coins and Inscription collection :

The Patna Museum has got a very good collection of coins which are quite representative of different periods and dynasties. Ranging from earliest punch marked coins to modern commemorative coins. There are a good number of gold coins of the Kushanas, Guptas and Mughal rulers in the coins cabinet of Patna Museum. Patna Museum has fairly large collection of inscription of ancient period.



Art and Weapon gallery :

This gallery of modern art displays objects of BIDARI ART, GLASS MATERIAL and many art objects gifted to this museum by British Raj. Among the war weapons, the sword and dagger as well as warrior dress of Mughal period are on display. The war trophies from Mesopotamia used in first world war are also displayed in the gallery.

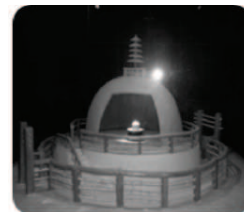


in the museum.

In the category of rare collection mention may also be made of a group of 23 stone discs from Murtaziganj. Two small group repouses of caparisoned couchant humped bulls from Vaishali is also important. A male standing figure with a turban on the head and holding a chamar is an example of fine craftsmanship.



The Patna Museum has the privilege of preserving the HOLY



RELIC CASKET OF BUDDHA containing his ashes and other associated materials discovered during the excavations of a stupa at vaishali.

There is a 53 FEET LONG FOSSILIZED TREE of Pine family discovered near Asansol in 1927.

There are oldarms, awards, daggers, shields, baghnakha and guns belonging to medieval period and cannon of first and second world war.

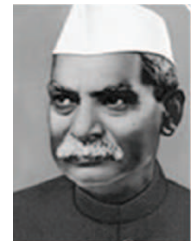


Some stuffed wild life specimens of fossils of animals, specimens of early animals, insects in India, sloth bear, bat, crocodile, twins goat, caryophyllacea (Bull), The pink head Duck etc are collected in NATURAL HISTORY GALLERY".

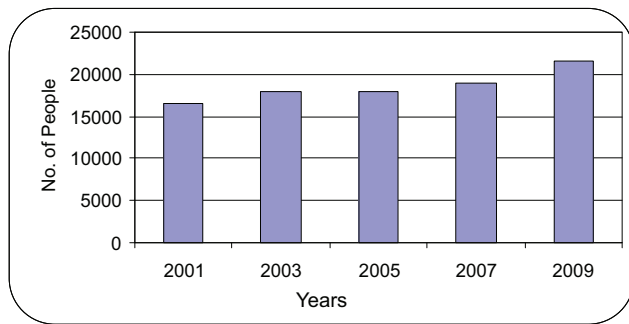
Gallery of Dr. Rajendra Prasad

The museum also displays the

gifts of late Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of Indian republic. He had received these gifts during the tenure of his presidency.



Annual arrival of people at Patna Museum



Years	No. of people
2001	16589
2003	17919
2005	17998
2007	18997
2009	21545

Conclusion :

Patna Museum is one of the biggest assets of Bihar. It is the home to the priceless relics in the country dating back to the Buddha period. It is the best source to know about our ancient culture and civilization.

Findings and suggestions :

- The shortage of revenue is the problem faced by the museum authority.

- The visitors face many problems due to lack of tourist amenities as problem of drinking water, proper sanitation facility.
- The parking of vehicles is the problem faced by the visitors. The visitors especially the foreigners should be provided with a guide by the museum authorities.
- The people who visit the museum should always follow the rules of the museum.
- They should not violate the antiquities displayed on the compound of the museum.

References :

1. *Personal interaction with director and other workers of the museum.*
2. www.articlebase.com
3. www.coinsgallery.com
4. www.heritage-key.com
5. www.patna.bih.nic.in